Patrick Mansur Freiherr Praetorius von Richthofen

THE BOOSTER/DELTA NEXUS

HENRY MILLER AND HIS FRIENDS IN THE LITERARY WORLD OF PARIS AND LONDON ON THE EVE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the summer of 1937, Alfred Perlès, Henry Miller's closest friend in the tumultuous years of Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn, gained possession of a small magazine called the Booster. The Booster was the house organ of the American Country Club of France and Perlès was asked to turn it into what his friend Lawrence Durrell later called a Paris version of the New Yorker. Instead, Perlès, Miller and Durrell, 'the burlesque trinity', galvanised the Club sheet into an avant-garde literary review, their contributions set incongruously against drab country club notes and snob-shop advertisements. Four issues of the new Booster appeared in the course of the autumn and winter; then, under threats of legal action for obscenity, the editors changed the review's name to Delta. The magazine's gravitational centre slowly shifted to London, where the last of three Deltas appeared in the Spring of 1939.

This thesis is an attempt to give an account of the Booster/Delta story. It is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the editors of the magazine and aspects of their art. Beginning at an individual level, it describes and analyses the formative relationships between Henry Miller and the main protagonists, Lawrence Durrell, Anais Nin, Alfred Perlès and Michael Fraenkel, and the question of their literary exile. It then goes on to inquire into the Villa Seurat circle as a literary group, bringing into play other, more peripheral group members. Finally, on a wider, socio-cultural level, this section discusses some aspects of the circle's relation to the fascinating artistic and intellectual milieu of Paris in the years before the war, to other artistic groups, individuals and movements.

Extra-literary phenomena like the Spanish Civil War are discussed as well.

The second and longer part of the thesis deals more especially with the Booster and Delta. Following a chronological path, various explicatory strands intertwine, biographical, critical, political, phiolosphical, social, commercial, even anecdotal, describing the turbulent publication history of the magazine from the boisterous Booster days to the gloom that coloured the atmosphere when the last Delta appeared in Spring 1939. Individual contributions are analysed in detail, related to the review's editorial position and to wider literary trends of the time. The Villa Seurat writers are naturally in the forefront of these critical surveys but other contributors will be discussed as well, poets like Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne and Ronald Bottrall and novelists like Karel Čapek, Antonia White and Mulk Raj Anand. The review's specific position in the little magazine world of the day is assessed by repeated comparisons and correlations with other contemporary little magazines in France, Britain and the United States, so that in the end the Booster's importance and that of Delta in the history of the Villa Seurat group can be properly assessed, as well as its achievement in representing and, to some extent in influencing, changing contemporary literary and artistic concerns of the pre-War years.

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by

Patrick Mansur Freiherr Praetorius von Richthofen

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I dedicate this work with love to my mother and father.

UNIV DUNELM

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree at this or another university.

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List of Abbreviations

The notes in this thesis appear at the end of each chapter where more than a single reference to the source of the quotation is involved. Otherwise notes are found bracketed after the quotation to which they refer. Abbreviations used are as follows:

ABHM.	Annette Baxter. Henry Miller Expatriate.
ACN.	Henry Miller. The Air-Conditioned Nightmare.
AdG.	Egon Friedell. Abschied des Genies.
AiP.	George Wickes. Americans in Paris.
AKExF.	Alfred Kantorowicz. Exil in Frankreich.
AJPT.	A.J.P.Taylor. English History 1914-1945.
AL.	American Literature since 1900. (ed. by Marcus Cunliffe).
Alf Letter	Henry Miller. What Are You Going to Do About Alf?.
Alyn	Lawrence Durrell. The Big Supposer. A Dialogue with Mark Alyn.
AN.i.	Anais Nin. The Journals of Anais Nin 1931-1934.
AN.ii.	Anais Nin. The Journals of Anais Nin 1934-1939.
AN.iii.	Anais Nin. The Journals of Anais Nin 1939-1944.
ANHJ.	Anais Nin. Henry and June.
ANJW.	Anais Nin. Journal of a Wife.
AO.	Lawrence Durrell and Alfred Perlès. Art and Outrage.
APB.	Alfred Perlès. "A Last Boost for the Booster".
AR.	Henry Miller. Notes on "Aaron's Rod".
ARNY.	Henry Miller. Aller Retour New York.
Assays	Kenneth Rexroth. Assays.
Autoportrait	Man Ray. Autoportrait.
AWFM.	Antonia White. Frost in May.
Ayck	Thomas Ayck. ...gegen die US-gesellschaft.
AxC.	Edmund Wilson. Axel's Castle.
B.	The Booster.
BB.	Lawrence Durrell. The Black Book.
BCGO.	Bernard Crick. George Orwell.
Berg30s.	Bernard Bergonzi. Reading the Thirties.
BergTSE.	Bernard Bergonzi. T.S.Eliot.
BGT.	Robert McAlmon. Being Geniuses Together.
BiML.	Henry Miller. The Books in My Life.
Blamires	A Guide to Twentieth Century Literature in English (ed. by Harry Blamires).
Brassai	Brassai. Brassai.
BrCiP.	Brassai. Camera in Paris.
BrPic.	Brassai. Conversations with Picasso.
BS.	Henry Miller. Black Spring.
BSOHB.	Henry Miller. Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch.

BY39.	Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year 1939
BY40.	Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year 1940
Campos	Christophe Campos. The View of France.
Cancer	Henry Miller. Tropic of Cancer.
CAP.	Contemporary Approaches to Psychology. (ed. by Harry Helson and William Beven).
Capricorn	Henry Miller. Tropic of Capricorn.
Casebook	A Casebook on Anais Nin. (ed. by Robert Zeller).
CCCP.	Cyril Connolly. The Condemned Playground.
CCEC.	Cyril Connolly. The Evening Colonnade.
CCEP.	Cyril Connolly. Enemies of Promise.
CCJM.	David Pryce-Jones. Cyril Connolly. Memoir and Journal.
CCUG.	Palinurus (Cyril Connolly). The Unquiet Grave.
CE.i.	George Orwell. The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters... Vol.I.
CE.ii.	George Orwell. The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters ... Vol.II.
CE.iv.	George Orwell. The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters ... Vol.IV.
CFDT.	Constatine Fitzgibbon. The Life of Dylan Thomas.
CICK.	Christopher Isherwood. Christopher and his Kind.
Clichy	Henry Miller. Quiet Days in Clichy.
Collins	A.S.Collins. English Literature of the Twentieth Century.
Colossus	Henry Miller. The Colossus of Maroussi.
Cont.Nov.	Contemporary Novelists. (ed. by James Vinson).
Cont.Poets.	Contemporary Poets. (ed. By James Vinson).
Corr.	Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell. A Private Correspondence.
CorrPriv.	Henry Miller and Joseph Delteil. Correspondence Privée 1935-1978.
CosE.	Henry Miller. The Cosmological Eye.
CPP.	Contemporary Poetry and Prose.
CS.	The Crown and the Sickle
D.	Delta.
DFNF.	Michael Fraenkel. The Day Face and the Night Face.
DG.i.	David Gascoyne. Journal 1936-37.
DG.ii.	David Gascoyne. Paris Journal 1937-39.
DGCP.	David Gascoyne. Collected Poems.
DGVT.	David Gascoyne. Collected Verse Translations.
DGSS.	David Gascoyne. A Short Survey of Surrealism.
DHLSL.	D.H.Lawrence. Selected Letters.
DINE.	Michael Fraenkel. Death Is Not Enough.
DiP.	Henry Miller. A Devil in Paradise.
DLB.	American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939. Dictionary of Literary Biography 4 (ed. by Karen Lane Rood).
3Dec.	Henry Miller : Three Decades of Criticism (ed. by Edward Mitchell).
DSDT.	Derek Stanford. Dylan Thomas.
DSFoP.	Derek Stanford. The Freedom of Poetry.
DTCL.	Dylan Thomas. Collected Letters.
DTEPW.	Dylan Thomas. Early Prose Writings.
DTQC.	David Tribe. Questions of Censorship.
DTSL.	Dylan Thomas. Selected Letters.
DTVW.	Dylan Thomas. Letters to Vernon Watkins.
Ellmann.	Richard Ellmann. James Joyce.

EMC.	E.M.Cioran. Widersprüchliche Konturen.
Entretiens	Lawrence Durrell. Entretiens.
EoP.	Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis. (ed. by Ludwig Eidelberg).
ER.	Macolm Cowley. Exile's Return.
Esslin	Martin Esslin. Artaud.
FabBMV.	The Faber Book of Modern Verse.(ed. by Michael Roberts).
FJTHM.	F.J.Temple. Henry Miller.
FJR.	Fritz Raddatz. Eros und Tod.
FMHR.	Hans Reichel. (ed. by François Mathey).
Ford	Hugh Ford. Published in Paris.
FrF.	Freud und die Folgen. (ed. by Dieter Eicke).
FrLD.	G.S.Fraser. Lawrence Durrell.
FrLDWW.	G.S.Fraser. Lawrence Durrell (Writers and their Work).
FSAA.	Francis Scarfe. Auden and After.
GBTMP.	Geoffrey Bullough. The Trend of Modern Poetry.
GGCS.	Geoffrey Grigson. The Crest on the Silver.
GGRec.	Geoffrey Grigson. Recollections.
Glicksberg	Charles Glicksberg. The Sexual Revolution in Modern America.
GOLW.	George Orwell. The Lost Writings.
Gülich	Elisabeth Gülich. "Raymond Queneau".
GWHM.	George Wickes. Henry Miller.
Hamlet	Michael Fraenkel and Henry Miller. The Michael Fraenkel - Henry Miller Correspondence called Hamlet.
Harrison	John Harrison. The Reactionaries.
HISA.	Henry Treece. How I See Apocalypse.
HM.	Hugo Manning. The It and the Odyssey of Henry Miller.
Hoffman	Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn Ulrich. The Little Magazine.
Hoops	Wyclef Hoops. "Lawrence Durrell".
Howarth	Herbert Howarth. Notes on Some Figures behind T.S.Eliot
HR.	The Happy Rock (ed. by Bern Porter).
HRCat.	Hans Reichel. Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (catalogue).
HRSW.	Herbert Read. Selected Writings.
HRTM.	Herbert Read. The Tenth Muse.
HTDT.	Henry Treece. Dylan Thomas.
HT.	Hugh Thomas. The Spanish Civil War.
Hyde	John K. Hyde. Benjamin Fondane.
Hynes	Samuel Hynes. The Auden Generation.
IE.	Egon Friedell. Ist die Erde bewohnt?
IH.	Ihab Hassan. The Literature of Silence.
IntHML.	The International Henry Miller Letter.
JBRS.	John Bayley. The Romantic Survival.
JHGS.	Janet Hobhouse. Everybody Who Was Anybody. A Biography of Gertrude Stein.
Jira	Jaroslav Jira. "The Position of Czech and Slovak Art in the International Art World".
Jouve	Pierre Jean Jouve. Gedichte.
JS30s.	Julian Symons. The Thirties.
Kahane	Jack Kahane. Memoirs of a Booklegger.
KC.	Kingdom Come.
Kermode	Frank Kermode. Puzzles and Epiphanies.

KiD.	Bernard Causton and G.Gordon Young. Keeping it Dark or The Censor's Handbook.
Kirk	Russell Kirk. Eliot and his Age.
KRBiB.	Kenneth Rexroth. Bird in the Bush.
KRDAS.	Kathleen Raine. Defending Ancient Springs.
LB.	London Bulletin.
LDCP.	Lawrence Durrell. Collected Poems.
LLT.	Life and Letters To-day.
LMMG.	Ludwig Marcuse. Meine Geschichte der Philosophie.
LMMZJ.	Ludwig Marcuse. Mein Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert.
LMObs.	Ludwig Marcuse. Obszön.
LMSF.	Ludwig Marcuse. Sigmund Freud.
LSAT.	Leon Shestov. All Things Are Possible.
LtAN.	Henry Miller. Letters to Anais Nin.
LtWL.	The Letters of Wyndham Lewis.
Mailer	Genius and Lust. A Journey Through the Major Writings of Henry Miller (ed. by Norman Mailer)
Martin	Jay Martin. Always Merry And Bright.
Meyers	Jeffrey Meyers. The Enemy.
McMillan	Dougald McMillan. transition.
MFAP.	Alfred Perlès. My Friend Alfred Perlès.
MFBD.	Michael Fraenkel. Bastard Death.
MFHM.	Alfred Perlès. My Friend Henry Miller.
MFLD.	Alfred Perlès. My Friend Lawrence Durrell.
MFS.	Modern Fiction Studies.
Money	Henry Miller. Money and How It Gets That Way.
Moore	The World of Lawrence Durrell (ed. by Harry T.Moore).
MSLC.	Milada Součkova. A Literature in Crisis.
MSLS.	Milada Součkova. A Literary Satellite.
MR.	Massachusetts Review.
MSS.	Martin Seymour-Smith. Who's Who in Twentieth Century Literature.
MWW.	G.S.Fraser. The Modern Writer and his World.
NA.	The New Apocalypse.
Nadeau	Maurice Nadeau. Geschichte des Surrealismus.
NBEP.	F.R.Leavis. New Bearings in English Poetry.
ND.	Night and Day.
NEW.	The New English Weekly.
NMHM.	Nicholas Moore. Henry Miller.
Nollau	Günther Nollau. International Communism and World Revolution.
NRF.	La Nouvelle Revue Française.
NV.	New Verse.
OO.	Oxford Outlook.
ORAA.	Otto Rank. Art and Artist.
ORK.	Otto Rank. Der Künstler.
ORTB.	Otto Rank. The Trauma of Birth.
ParFr.	Gertrude Stein. Paris France.
Paris	Paris-Paris 1937-1957.
PC.	Poetry (Chicago).
PL.	Poetry London.
PLNY.	Poetry London/New York
PMSC.	Geoffrey Potocki of Montalk. Social Climbers in Bloomsbury.
PR.	Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews. Second Series.

Press	John Press. Rule and Energy.
PRL.	Richard Admussen. Les Petites Revues Litteraires.
Putnam	Samuel Putnam. Paris Was Our Mistress.
QeRM.	Alfred Perlès. Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur.
RALD.	Richard Aldington and Lawrence Durrell. Literary Lifelines.
Ray	Paul C. Ray. The Surrealist Movement in England.
RBCP.	The Collected Poems of Ronald Bottrall.
RBTP.	Ronald Bottrall. The Turning Path.
Remember	Henry Miller. Remember to Remember.
Ren.	Alfred Perlès. The Renegade.
RHIP.	Rayner Heppenstall. The Intellectual Part.
RiB.	Henry Miller. Reunion in Barcelona.
RiBS.	Alfred Perlès. Reunion in Big Sur.
RKDT.	R.B.Kershner. Dylan Thomas.
RPScr.	Roland Penrose. Scrapbook 1900-1981.
RR.	The Right Review.
RSS.	Robert Short. "Surrealism".
RT.	Alfred Perlès. Round Trip.
Ruthven	K.K.Ruthven. Myth.
RWCS.	Raymond Williams. Culture and Society.
SatW.	Henry Miller. Sunday After the War.
SB.	Noel Fitch. Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation.
Scheugl	Hans Scheugl and Ernst Schmidt. Eine Subgeschichte des Films.
Schmidt	Michael Schmidt. An Introduction to Fifty Modern British Poets.
Schmiele	Walter Schmiele. Henry Miller in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten.
SoL.	Edmund Wilson. The Shores of Light.
Sontag	Susan Sontag. A Susan Sontag Reader
Spirit	Lawrence Durrell. Spirit Of Place.
SS30s.	Stephen Spender. The Thirties and After.
SSPoetry.	Stephen Spender. Poetry Since 1939.
SSWWW.	Stephen Spender. World Within World.
Steiner	George Steiner. Language and Silence.
StR.	George Steiner. A Reader.
Synth.	Synthèses.
Taft	Jessie Taft. Otto Rank.
TC.	Two Cities.
TCA.	Twentieth Century Authors. First Supplement. (ed. by Stanley Kurtz and Howard Haycraft).
TCFL.	Harry Moore. Twentieth Century French Literature.
TCL.	Twentieth Century Literature.
TCV.	Twentieth Century Verse.
ThiH.	Henry Miller. This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn.
Thirties	The Thirties. Fiction, Poetry, Drama (ed. by Warren French).
Thurley	Geoffrey Thurley. The Ironic Harvest.
T'ien Hsia.	The T'ien Hsia Monthly.
Tindall	William Tindall. Forces in Modern British Literature.
TQ.	This Quarter.
TTC.	The Twentieth Century (ed. by Bernard Bergonzi).
TWM.	Wyndham Lewis. Time and Western Man.
Unterecker	John Unterecker. Lawrence Durrell.

WA.i.	World Authors 1950-1970. (ed. by John Wakeman).
WA.ii.	World Authors 1970-1975. (ed. by John Wakeman).
WAb.	Henry Miller, Hilaire Hiler and William Saroyan. Why Abstract?
WFSurr.	Wallace Fowlie. Age of Surrealism.
WFJournal.	Wallace Fowlie. Journal of Rehearsals.
WH.	The White Horseman.
Williams	P.M.Williams. "From Dreyfus to Vichy".
WiP	Herbert Lottman. The Left Bank. Writers in Paris.
WLHL.	Kathleen Raine. "Waste Land, Holy Land".
WoA.	Anais Nin. Winter of Artifice.
WoH.	Henry Miller. The Wisdom of the Heart.
WR.	Henry Miller. The Waters Reglitterized.
WRMC.	Waverly Root. "Miller, Céline and Others".
WRPHM.	Waverly Root. "Poor Henry Miller".
WRHMAN.	Waverly Root. "Henry Miller and Anais Nin".
WS.	William Shirer. The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.
WSDG.	William Saroyan. Don't Go But If You Must Say Hello to Everybody.

i. PROLOGUE

I came across Lawrence Durrell's The Black Book purely by accident. An old Cardinal edition, it was quietly collecting dust in one of my father's book-cases, spine brittle, pages yellowed like autumn leaves, forgotten. Like so many other Durrell enthusiasts my parents had probably been attracted to this little black book many years ago by a front cover notice announcing a "brilliant, lusty, Rabelaisian novel" by the "AUTHOR OF JUSTINE, BALTHASAR, MOUNTOLIVE AND CLEA". What intrigued me more than the reference to the once immensely popular Alexandria Quartet, however, was a little blurb on the back cover. "The Black Book is the first piece of work by a new English writer to give me any hope for the future of prose fiction". These words of praise were by T.S.Eliot. I read the book, read it again and decided to write my M.A. dissertation at the University of Bonn on it.

My introduction into Durrell's early prose work was also a first introduction to Henry Miller. I soon discovered that the role played by the notorious author of Tropic of Cancer in inspiring, editing and finally publishing The Black Book was considerable. My professor, however, insisting upon a strictly critical assessment of The Black Book, felt that Durrell's association with Miller did not merit more than a cursory treatment. The book itself, a densely poetic jungle of images, colours and sounds, was in any event a thankful object for probing interpretative skills and I much enjoyed tracing carefully this structural pattern, unwinding that strand of meaning or making out some more obscure mythological allusion. A feeling of unease, a nagging discontent, however, never quite left me, for it was not lost on me that there existed just beyond the text itself another world, one which not only appeared to be altogether more fascinating, strange and vivid than Durrell's account of a motley group of lumpen-proletarian intellectuals in a shabby London hotel, but also central to a genuine understanding of the book itself.

This world 'beyond', I came to feel, included not merely the very personal experiences which Durrell drew on for material, his 'bohemian' days in England and the pastoral life in Corfu described so well in Prospero's Cell and Gerald Durrell's My Family and other Animals. It extended also to Miller and to that boisterous group of writers and artists who congregated at the studio in the Villa Seurat

cul-de-sac just south of Montparnasse. Indeed, once seriously begun, the journey outwards from the The Black Book could not stop at Durrell's affiliation with the Miller set, however important, and it did not stop at the frazzled world of the Anglo-American literary expatriate either, those who had stayed in Europe after les années folles had withered away in the Depression. The work and world of American and English writers of the time was suddenly very present as well, movements and literary groups, magazines and manifestoes, books and poems reaching from Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men to Auden's "Spain" and Isherwood's Goodbye to Berlin, from Wolfe's The Web and the Rock to Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier, from Wyndham Lewis' The Revenge For Love to Eliot's "Burnt Norton" and Hemingway's The First Forty-Nine Short Stories. Indeed, the context had to be widened even more to include contemporary literature as such, the world of Gide and Pasternak, Malraux and Ilya Ehrenburg, Céline and Artaud, Thomas Mann and Isaac Babel, Ernst Jünger and Louis Aragon, Brecht and Breton and countless others. In fact, how could the word 'beyond' mean anything less than the entire universe of art of the time that stretched from Picasso's Guernica to the propagandist canvasses of Stalin's social realists, from Matisse paintings and Brancusi's polished birds to the cloying sculptures of Arno Breker, from Buñuel's L'Age d'Or to Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph des Willens, from Malraux' L'Espoir to Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, from the nauseating exhibition of "Degenerate Art" in Munich to the languishing Bauhaus in Chicago and the great surrealist exhibitions in Paris, London and New York. But Reading the Thirties (thus the title of a study by Bernard Bergonzi) involved even more; popular dances like the Lambeth Walk, the Palais Glide and the Big Apple were a part of this world, the development of nylon and DDT, the great goldfish-swallowing fad in America in 1939 and Otto Hahn's discovery of nuclear fission, Cole Porter's "Rosalie", Orson Welles' famous radio programme Invasion from Mars and Joe Louis' one round knock-out of Max Schmeling, Gone With the Wind and Hellzapoppin, the coronation of George VI and the deaths of Thomas Masaryk, Pius XI, Gabriel d'Annunzio, Ernst Toller, Kamal Atatürk, Ford Madox Ford, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. And further, in these years of European crisis, 'beyond' would seem to have meant especially the political sphere, a world deteriorating in a turmoil of gathering misery, violence and

war. Into The Black Book years, the age of Stalin and Schuschnigg, Dolores Ibarruri, Ghandi and Neville Chamberlain, of Hitler and Léon Blum, Francisco Franco, Maxim Litvinov and Benito Mussolini, Chiang Kai-Shek, Viscount Halifax, and Manuel Azana, Ribbentrop, Daladier and Eduard Benes, fell the gradual dissolution of the Popular Front in France, strikes and riots in Paris, the decline of the League of Nations, the Anti-Comintern pact, economic recession and ten million unemployed in the United States, the slow retreat of the Republican forces in the murderous Spanish Civil War, the siege of Madrid, the suppression of the P.O.U.M. and the Anarchists in Barcelona and the destruction of Guernica in April 1937, show trials and ruthless campaigns against alleged traitors and saboteurs in the U.S.S.R., the Japanese atrocities in Nanking and other cities, indiscriminate aerial bombardment of Chinese cities, the high handed annexation of Austria, the Czech Crisis and the shameful Munich agreement, the decline of appeasement politics, "peace in our time" and the issuing of gas-masks to Londoners in September 1938, anti-semitic outrages of great violence in Germany and the death of Nobel Peace Prize winner Carl von Ossietzky in a Nazi concentration camp, the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia and finally the ignoble Nazi-Soviet pact.

Here was a teemingly complex world so full of tragedy and crisis, enthusiasm and disgust, boisterousness and banality, love and hatred, hope, idealism and disillusionment, hatred and brutality, injustice and humanity, apocalyptic apprehension, bitterness and sorrow, so much life, that by the time I completed my study of The Black Book I had come to feel very much like a tenant sitting in his flat at night eyes fixed on the televison screen, but listening in truth with anger and sadness to the sounds of an animated party next door, unable to join in. I had kept to The Black Book, taking it apart diligently, stubbornly even, sensing all the while, however, both what Durrell described as the "warmth and the fury of the Villa Seurat days" (Corr.211) and the fascination of the spirit of the age, but I could not establish adequately that meaningful connection between the literary work and this world 'beyond'.

When the opportunity came I decided to try to answer some of those questions that I had neglected before, to bring to bear on the work of Durrell and Miller aspects that I had previously all but ignored. This time, I thought, there would be no artificial constrictions, no false 'methodological' boundaries; there would be a wider, more generous and more flexible approach. Whatever seemed relevant would be brought into play, whatever context seemed illuminating, whether biographical, political, social, commercial, aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, or even anecdotal. I proposed to allow myself, in other words, a greater amount of freedom, and the reason for this was that I had stumbled upon what seemed to offer the pathway to an insight into the world of the Villa Seurat that was ideally suited to my purposes. This was the Booster and Delta.

From the summer of 1937 until Easter 1939 Miller, Durrell and friends edited and published a literary review which was first called the Booster and subsequently Delta. In my Black Book days I had been practically unaware of the magazine's existence. If I remember rightly, I contented myself with knowing that most commentators took a rather poor view of the magazine. Some of them, like George Wickes, the editor of the correspondence between Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell, conceded that it was funny and even called it "the most hilarious of little magazines" (Corr.113). But among the handful of critics who wrote about it there were apparently none who attached to the Booster and Delta any greater literary importance. In the memoirs of the editors themselves the magazine did not seem to play an eminent role either. For Miller's friend, Alfred Perlès, editor in chief, the Booster story "was no doubt a joyous interlude, but only an interlude" (MFHM.176).

I do not recall what turned my mind towards the Booster in the end. Perhaps it was after all the mild surprise at finding that hardly anybody seemed to have bothered to look at the review in detail. What was the Booster and what was Delta? The answers provided, emphasising mostly the anecdotal aspect of the Booster story, how Miller and friends took over the American Country Club review and turned it into "a riotous, reckless, provocative magazine of shock"(Hoffman 337), were unsatisfactory. Sometimes one even had the feeling that commentators no more than echoed Perlès' ten-page reminiscence in My

Friend Henry Miller (and his errors). The phenomenon of the magazine as such needed to be described, so it seemed to me, its importance for the Villa Seurat habitués properly assessed.

Furthermore, I soon realised (even before holding a set of Boosters in my hands) that discoursing upon the review might possibly bring me closer to a comprehensive understanding of the work and the world of the Villa Seurat writers as well. After receiving from New York a reprint of the entire run of seven issues, I felt fairly certain that my expectations would not be disappointed; the Booster and Delta seemed to bring together in a fascinating way those three aspects whose lively interaction I had all but disregarded in my explication of The Black Book. First, as a vehicle for the editors' personal literary expressions, it presented to the reader individual contributions, essays, poems and excerpts from novels (also from The Black Book), a concrete textual base in other words. Second, as a market place in which they exchanged ideas, the Booster and Delta promised to shed some light on what seemed that centrally important Villa Seurat group formula, indicating how Miller and his comrades collaborated and to what extent and under which conditions they operated as a literary coterie. And finally, a magazine which involved work by many writers outside the immediate Villa Seurat orbit - Perlès mentioned in his Miller book only a handful like William Saroyan, Dylan Thomas, Antonia White, Karel Čapek, but there were in fact well over fifty contributors (MFHM.173) - seemed naturally to require an extensive discussion of the relation of the editors' work to the wider literary world outside, to public events and the spirit of the age. The review, in short, urged itself upon me not only as a most promising object of study as such but from the three-fold perspective which I have just mentioned, as a kind of guide to the illumination of the work and world of the Villa Seurat group as well.

ii. THE VILLA SEURAT GROUP AND PARIS

A. HENRY MILLER AND HIS FRIENDS : "THE NEW 'INTERNATIONALISTS' WITHOUT AN INTERNATIONALE".

I. Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell: Metropolitan Exile and the "Gauguin of modern poetry".

When they first met in 1937 Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller were both expatriates. Like many of their friends and acquaintances, they belonged to a class of artists, bohemians, the "truly displaced, disinherited and disenchanted who through choice or political necessity, had been divorced from their roots and now were at home in many new cultures, the new 'internationalists' without an Internationale" (LtAN.13). There were not many Frenchmen among those who congregated at Miller's Villa Seurat studio. Alfred Perlès was a Viennese with a Czechoslovak passport, Anais Nin the daughter of a Spanish pianist. There were also Brassai, the famous Hungarian photographer, Hans Reichel, the German painter and friend of Klee and Rilke, Michael Fraenkel, the American "Death philosopher" who was of Russian origin, Walter Lowenfels, another American poet, the Czechoslovak writer Milada Souckova, Betty Ryan, an Englishwoman, the Russian Ossip Zadkine, the Swiss writer and adventurer Blaise Cendrars, the New York painter Hilaire Hiler, Tcheou Nien-Sien, a Chinese student, David Gascoyne, the English surrealist poet, David Edgar, an American occultist, the Swiss astrologer Conrad Moricand, Otto Rank, the Austrian psychologist and former favourite of Freud, the American painter Abraham Rattner, Benjamin Fondane, Rumanian philosopher and poet, Anais Nin, Richard Osborn, a lawyer from Connecticut, Gonzalo More, a Peruvian Marxist, and Lawrence Durrell, the Englishman from Corfu.

As the title of this first section suggests HENRY MILLER AND HIS FRIENDS: "THE NEW 'INTERNATIONALISTS' WITHOUT AN INTERNATIONAL" there will be two aspects onto which our attention will be focussed: the relationships, literary and otherwise, between Henry Miller and the closest of his associates, and the important phenomenon of literary

exile in the twentieth century. One must point out here that there exists a slight difference of emphasis in this chapter on Durrell and Miller and in those three that follow. The latter lay stress on the mutually formative friendships between Miller and Alfred Perlès, Anais Nin and Michael Fraenkel respectively, while this chapter will deal more specifically with questions of literary exile in its Anglo-American guise as manifested in the individual experience of Miller and Durrell. Their literary interchange and friendship, whose beginning and climax coincide more or less exactly with the Booster/Delta period, will be the recurrent subject of later chapters.

Annette Baxter, the author of Henry Miller : Expatriate, has suggested that in twentieth century "the term exile came to signify an attitude of alienation rather than simply the fact of geographic removal" (ABHM.2). One might live abroad, yet hardly be an exile, just as one might be an exile, and still live in a place where one felt a stranger. This latter condition can be termed "inner exile", or "spiritual exile" as Annette Baxter said, with Poe, Dickinson, Hopkins and Rimbaud as obvious examples (1). A period of inner exile, of an ever intensifying alienation will precede departure into outer exile. Exile (where it is not altogether a literary convention) may be said to be a direct consequence of an overwhelming accumulation of adverse personal experiences, as indeed the life stories both of Miller and of Durrell provide casebook examples of failed socialisation, of an early rejection by and estrangement from society around them. Their books, Tropic of Capricorn and The Black Book, dramatise graphically this estrangement.

The son of a colonial engineer, Durrell was an expatriate by birth. He grew up in India. Against the will of his mother, he was sent to Britain at the age of twelve, and from the outset, as he later recalled, he felt exiled (Alyn 26). Suburban life in England was the very antithesis to his happy childhood with his parents at the foot of the Himalayas. In the first semi-autobiographical novel Pied Piper of Lovers, he described how public school experiences at St. Edmunds in Cambridge intensified his hatred of England, and to Miller he wrote with characteristic flamboyance of "that mean, shabby little island up

there" which "wrung my guts out of me and tried to destroy anything singular and unique in me"(Corr.60). He had difficulties in integrating, and in spite of being (in his own words) intellectually "brilliant"(Alyn 29), he failed the Oxford and Cambridge entrance exams a number of times. He wanted to become a writer. Soon he was leading a "bohemian" life in Bloomsbury, a description of which he presented to Miller in one of his earliest letters:

> I hymned and whored in London - playing jazz in a night-club, composing jazz songs, working in real estate. Never really starved but I wonder whether thin rations are not another degree of starvation. I met Nancy in an equally precarious position and we struck up an incongruous partnership: a dream of broken bottles, tinned food, rancid meat ... well, we did a bit of drinking and dying. The second lesson according to St Paul. Ran a photographic studio together. It crashed. Tried posters, short stories, journalism, everything short of selling our bottoms to a clergyman.(2)

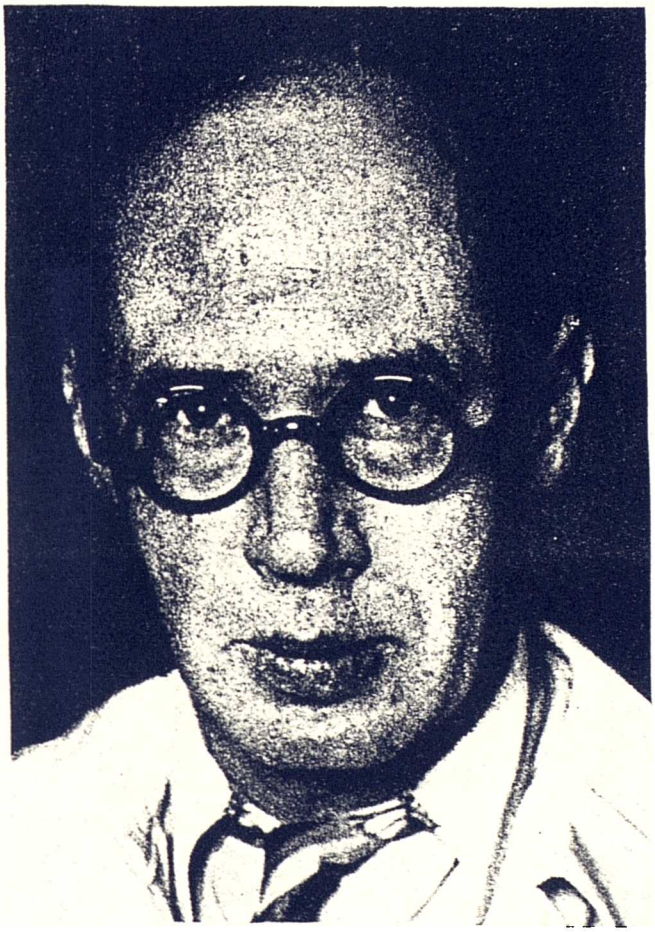
However exaggerated, this short account does convey that Durrell felt that his foothold in London was more than slight. He felt on the fringe of society - which was also, it seems, where he wanted to be.

The Black Book was Durrell's depiction of this shabby, pre-Mediterranean life. In the eyes of Kenneth Rexroth it was "a study of the etiology of one and the commonest kind of Bohemianism", the depiction of the typical "upstart product of a lower-middle-class Puritan background who discovers himself unable to compete with the world of civilized men which he is trying to enter"(Assays 126). In Rexroth's view, this Black Book type, the "debauched Puritan, an unwisely paroled shopkeeper" was "bound for Hell in a third-class carriage" (ibid.). Durrell himself, however, was not bound for hell and he soon realised that life in England was not for him. In The Black Book, he described this existence as "the English Death", a stifling and poisonous mode of living, which had to be left behind, on pain of "spiritual" death. Of course, his antagonistic view of English society was not at all original and partly derived from literary predecessors. Durrell later admitted: "When I first started to write I was very struck by one of D.H.Lawrence's essays which showed me just how that country treated its writers. That was what made me resolve always to swim against the stream" (Alyn 26). Still, his complaints were not unjustified. A

quotation from Geoffrey Grigson's Recollections shows: "The public and official provinciality of the time in London (a condition we seem to be restoring in 1984), and in the universities, in spite of Joyce, Lewis and Eliot, and Eliot's Criterion, remained more than usually extreme" (GGRec.26). Also, a note in Cyril Connolly's journal of 1929 reads: "There is no place in England for a serious rebel. If you hate both diehards and bright young people you have, like Huxley, Lawrence, Joyce etc to go and live abroad" (CCJM.224). Durrell's answer to the "English Disease" was as little original as was his analysis of its symptoms; the English romantics, he said, had "all needed Europe" (PR.265), and "my heroes of my generation, the Lawrences, the Norman Douglases, the Aldingtons, the Eliots, the Graveses, their ambition was always to be European" (PR.262). And so he, too, escaped to Europe.

Kenneth Rexroth's debauched puritans also populated the multifarious world of Henry Miller, in which were revealed "the behavior and values of the literate disposessed, the underemployed of the clerkly caste". The term Rexroth used here was "Surplus Man", a term which we will come across again in this thesis (Cont.Nov.958). In his article "Henry Miller - The Pathology of Isolation", another critic, Alwyn Lee, has pointed out that Miller himself was "important as a symbol of how deep a fissure has grown between our culture and its own origins, how this century may exclude those apparently living in its midst" (3Dec.68). Miller was almost forty when he left for Europe in 1930. For a good part of his life in America he had felt outside and different, an inner exile, a "Surplus Man". The litany of his American autobiographical romance is that "everything conspired to set me off as an outlaw, as an enemy of society" (Capricorn 51). He lived in the heart of New York, but did not feel at home. The jobs he held were legion, the view of society wide, but it was a view from the outside looking in. He worked on a plantation in California, in the Atlas Portland Cement Company, in the Ministry of War in Washington, and as

dish-washer, bus boy, newsie, messenger boy, grave-digger, bill sticker, book salesman, bell hop, bartender, liquor salesman, typist, adding machine operator, librarian, statistician, charity worker, mechanic, insurance collector, garbage collector, usher, secretary to an evangelist, dock hand, street car conductor, gymnasium instructor,



Henry Miller

milk driver, ticket chopper, etc.(CosE.347)

He never stayed on for very long. It was especially, however, as personnel manager of the Western Union Telegraph Company, that Miller took in American society - only to reject it all the more vehemently. "You could see the whole American life - economically, politically, morally, spiritually, artistically, statistically, pathologically", but to Miller it "looked like a grand chancre on a worn out conk" (Capricorn 19). Disgusted by this society, that rejected him in its turn, he led a vagrant life, spent many years in financial straits, making fruitless attempts to be a writer, before first crossing the Atlantic in the late twenties. With his wife June, he travelled in Europe for about nine months, but he did not feel its 'magic' then. He returned to New York only to come back to Paris alone in 1930, fired by the intense hope, as he wrote in the coda to Nexus, that he would never have to set eyes on America again.

If one is right in assuming that unlike, for instance, the many writers forced abruptly into exile by political or material circumstances, a condition of "spiritual" exile preceded the flight of Durrell and Miller from England and America respectively, one must ask what were the possible concomitants of this long inner dissociation from society? How did it influence and shape Miller's and Durrell's artistic, psychological and even political outlook on the world?

Alienation from the outside culture can have dangerous consequences for the artist. As Annette Baxter has said: "the artist's natural tendency to live within, to carry on a perpetual inner monologue, may become intensified, rendering him, as he loses contact with the life about him, more vulnerable to artistic and personal disorganization" (ABHM.16). Artistic disorganisation may be read to imply amongst other things, obscurity, a privacy of meaning, which W.Y.Tindall, in a chapter entitled "Exile", regarded as a "socially unhealthy" sign of the modern "poet's independence of the common reader"(Tindall 20). Personal disorganisation will refer to psychic instability. Virtually all artists of the broadly romantic vein seem to share this psychic precariousness, from the early poets of German Sturm und Drang to Dostoievski, Hamsun, the surrealists and others. In the period of

their inner exile, when Miller and the Durrell of The Black Book threw off (so they said) the values and traditions of the society to which they did not belong, insanity seemed to them sometimes to be lurking just around the corner. Had their withdrawal and isolation really been as radical as often asserted, suicide or a psychiatric ward might have proved inescapable. Indeed, many of their friends were temporarily comitted for treatment. Miller said: "In America I was in danger of going mad or committing suicide. I felt so completely isolated" (PR.264). And Lawrence Durrell: "I came very close to madness"(Alyn 46).

Having pointed that out one must add that contrary to the implication of their autobiographical romances, the kind of isolation and estrangement which Miller and Durrell experienced were no altogether singular phenomena in the 1920s and 1930s. In the wake of World War One and in the catastrophic Depression years many Europeans and many Americans underwent a similar material, psychological and spiritual uprooting and disintegration. In fact, it is important to note here that, as Rexroth's term "Surplus Man" suggests, Miller and Durrell were members of a not negligible social group. We will return to the more immediately political implications of this sociological aspect in the course of this work. Suffering the disintegration of traditional contexts, at any rate, was clearly no hardship restricted to perceptive artists and writers like Miller and Durrell. Even the desire to put something in the place of these old traditions seems to have been a not unusual response to the sense of alienation and emptiness, and it is not wonder that fostering contexts with definitive answers such as religious sects or radical political parties flower in times of upheaval and uncertainty. The more creative of 'Surplus Men', however, will attempt to discover answers on his own, to prepare or even begin the construction of what Alwyn Lee has called "a one-man culture" (3Dec.69), a work of art, a subjective system of ideas, a syncretistic political ideology even. The new Weltanschauung, whether political, psychological or aesthetic, is conceived as a replacement for (and an antidote to) the old, dead traditions of which The Black Book says: "Instead of nourishing us they are the umpires of our defeat, our decline and fall"(BB.157). Both Miller and Durrell delved passionately in cosmological speculation and often spoke of creating a new

mythology. "The myth will come back to us", Durell's Black Book proclaimed: "A new language, a new deity, a new indulgence impend from heaven" (BB.151).

For them, as for so many writers in the romantic tradition, the word 'myth' had a strange attraction as a foundation stone of a new personal culture. But what precisely is a 'myth', and what were the properties of what one might call the 'mythic' imagination? The term itself, of course, is controversial and for decades 'specialists' have been attempting in vain to arrive at some conclusive definition. Indeed, one could wish to dispense with it altogether, were it not for the fact that it was one of the magical words central not only to the Villa Seurat nomenclature, but to the spirit of the times as well. In the course of this thesis we will have occassion to discuss some of the many authorities of the psycho-cosmological field whom Miller and friends consulted in their mythological quest, thinkers like Freud, Jung, Frazer and Breton. Here, I will only point out that any attempt to define in rational terms the precise contours of the 'myth' would have met with scornful opposition on their part, and indeed the moment a rational sceptic touches the 'mythic' realm where causality and logic are proclaimed invalid, he realises that he is moving on thin ice. Still, this does not mean that nothing can be said about 'myth', nor that one has to accept every invocation of the same on the part of the Booster set as genuinely partaking of that magical, totemistic world it allegedly stems from. It seems difficult to deny categorically the existence of such a world. So for my purposes I propose the following tri-partite distinction: if one has on the one hand the myth, an archteypal truth (to use Jungian terminology) emanating from the great collective unconscious, a phenomenon which is hardly conveyable in a discursive mode, and if one has on the other hand perceptions of empirical reality communicated in rational, generally understandable terms, one might say that there exists somewhere inbetween a connecting link. Deriving from an euhemeristic interpretation of myth, i.e. the assignation of historic origins to legends and myths, this link ca be said to be something like an intensely and recurrently communicated perception of a real phenomena, be it a place, a person, an event, or vision, which aims to give meaning and structure to the chaotic and disorderly flux of the outer or inner

world. The Boosters (as one might also call the Miller circle) dealt in such quasi-myths.

Intermediary 'myths' seem in other words to be expressions of a desire for order, clarity. Always verging on the cliché and sometimes no more than a personal obsession, an idée fixe, in the most literal sense, they tend to affect the aura of absolute truths, and it is consequently almost inevitable, though not asolutely necessary, that they should draw on revelatory, mystical and religious terminology. The mode of perception oriented towards this kind of quasi-myth will claim to see symbolic patterns and correspondences, where the rational mind perceives only arbitrariness; it will claim to recreate deeper meanings, where the sceptic can see only partiality, exaggeration, and the obtrusive willingness to make large claims (Press 53). Thus from a rationalist standpoint, an intermidiary 'myth', whether affirming mystical heights or not, is less a fiction than a distortion, at best a gross simplification of reality posing arrogantly as an absolute. If a mythopoeic imagination projects amplified meaning and significance on the surrounding world and frequently on to itself as well, then one might say it is a way of looking at the world akin to that of the caricaturist, an enthusiastic manner of perception, which can lead to exaggerated appreciation as well as a heightened sense of disgust. First and foremost, however, the mythographic imagination seems the consequence of a reaction against the complexity, instability, disintegration and anonymity of modern life. In the wake of such studies as The Golden Bough, Totem und Tabu, Traumdeutung, and La mentalité primitive, one must say that to a certain degree at least the mythographer's view of the world is also a conscious stance against the analytical mind's tendency to differentiate, to separate and to question. It is eloquent of a desire for "wholeness", a key-word in the Miller-Durrell group, for an integrated view of the world, a state of 'primitive' familiarity with the surrounding world. It is, in short, the attitude perfectly suited to the alienated artist, to the literary exile of the twentieth century. A poet like Ezra Pound would follow the words of Los in Blake's Jerusalem, who said: "I must Create a System or be enslaved by another Man's"(3). Such independence, however, was usually dearly bought, as K.K.Ruthven has pertinently pointed out: "Mythopoesis is the growth point of a

mythology, but hazardous to those who cultivate it". And he added that "the strain of manufacturing a Schlegelian mythology out of the deepest depths of the spirit is enormous"(Ruthven 70). Moreover, new mythologies are almost without exception of great obscurity, as they are either of a very private nature, semi-myths painfully and thinly groping to universal validity, or a confusing pot-pourri of elements, clichés filched from older mythological edifices. Moreover, a private mythology "does not have the resonances of one you inherit" (Ruthven 69). Thus, even if one accepts the reality of a mythical dimension, one is forced to say, that to erect a new system of myths (in the sense of universally active archetypes) is a task next to impossible. One might even say that the less original a 'new' mythology, the more effective it could hope to be. Very few of the 'mythopoeic' writers ever achieved their goal. Yeats' A Vision of 1937 is all but unreadable. Still, this did not discourage others from trying. We will return to discuss the 'cosmological' concepts of Miller and Durrell in later chapters. The point here is that there seems to exist a link between the phenomenon of literary exile and the tendency to deal in 'myths'. Indeed, whereas the great objective of a new universal mythology was never achieved by the Villa Seurat writers, the by-products of this attempt, especially their revitalising of older semi-myths, were not always unsuccessful.

A first of these Villa Seurat half-myths was clearly that of the "English Death" and its American pendant "the Air-Conditioned Nightmare". If a new "one man culture" was to be created, the bankruptcy of the old order of values had to be hammered home. The books and essays and letters of Miller and Durrell present (among other things) a highly syncretistic Kulturkritik, an uneven attack on modern civilisation in its Anglo-American guise, and this ranged from perceptive description of contemporary phenomena to histrionic commonplaces, from humorous and satirical descriptions of metropolitan life to hysterical polemics against the Anglo-Saxon psyche, from perspicuous calls for individual freedom to invocations of apocalypse. Much of this criticism was not original, at least as far as ideas and attitudes were concerned. Miller's fulminations reiterated post-1918 impatience among American artists and writers with (in the words of Samuel Putnam) "the overwhelming material values enforced by a standardized

and machine-made civilization, the lack of any spiritual depth, the falsity, the sentimentality, the hypocrisy, the repression that go with such a civilization" (ABHM.3). Malcolm Cowley spoke of "a widespread revolt among American artists against puritanism, prohibition and booster clubs" (DLB.xii). Van Wyck Brooks and Harold Stearns and an endless entourage of critics portrayed America as a country inimical to art, and this subsequently became a central part of Henry Miller's credo as well. Against the atmospheric background of Nietzsche and Spengler, he and Durrell reasserted conventional diatribes against sham materialism, the puritanical archenemy, modern man's overestimation of logic and reason, deploring that the unconscious was shackled and so on. I will return to discuss in detail various aspects of this critique, but one must here say that it is not easy to discover central elements which do not immediately call to mind precedents in other writers. The repeated invocation of l'immonde cité, for instance, of cities like London or New York, said by Miller to be "erected over a hollow pit of nothingness"(Cancer 74), no more than vary a theme established by Baudelaire, by Eliot, by Pound and Joyce and many others (Kermode 143). More especially, however, the indictment of Anglo-American bourgeois culture calls to mind D.H.Lawrence. Miller and Durrell echoed Laurentian notions of the spiritual impoverishment of modern industrial man, the view of the debilitating effect of the dominant materialistic-scientific civilisation, the polemics against a decrepit and diseased England, against emotional poverty manifest in the all-pervasive moral inhibitions and countless barriers set up against an integrated existence. It is not necessary to point out at this moment other elements of Lawrence's anti-intellectual, primitivist conceptions many of which the Booster editors subscribed to as well. One might mention, however, the curious fact, that despite his angry denunciations, Lawrence maintained a sympathetic hold on an idea of England and original Englishness, a complex nostalgia for "home" which was often shared by other expatriates including Miller and Durrell.

Having said that the Booster duo adopted a conventional critique, one must add that Miller's attacks on American civilisation reached a flamboyance and hostility which had not been seen before. The critic J.D.Brown saw a direct link with the long duration of his 'spiritual

exile':

> He knew intimately the litany of complaints earlier expatriates had formulated, and he had lived in the heart of an industrialized, inhuman society far longer than those who had fled to Paris in the twenties. His rejection of America was therefore unequaled in its bitterness.(DLB.283)

The intensity of Miller's rejection and that of Durrell's too, in other words, frequently (but not always) charged what they said with great energy, enough to propel it into a simulacrum of originality. Moreover, as we will discover in the course of this thesis, when they said what they said was almost more important than the originality (or lack of originality) of what they said. Throughout the 1930s Miller's invectives and those of Lawrence Durrell seemed oddly out of time for they appeared at a time when the heroic era of Anglo-American expatriatism was already over and most American and English writers were practising reconciliation with their homeland in the hope of change which the economic and social upheavals of the Depression had stirred in them. Not so Miller and Durrell. "Henry Miller went to Paris when most of the Americans were coming home"(AiP.8), and Durrell went to Corfu when his many of his contemporaries held that the artist should stay at home and work for the improvement of society. In Exile's Return, Malcolm Cowley spoke of the lost generation's paths, which "seem to be interwoven into a larger pattern of exile (if only in spirit) and return from exile, of alienation and reintegration" (ER.292). Miller did not fit into this pattern. He and Durrell were anachronisms, and thus represented eccentric and extraordinary counter-points.

Another half-myth which Miller and Durrell insisted on with penetrating regularity was the romantic conception of the artist's essential loneliness, a fixed idea closely linked to the obsessive denigration of a society that had rejected them. "An artist is always alone - if he is an artist. No, what the artist needs is loneliness"(Tropic 72). Given their alienation from society, it seems logical that, when Miller and Durrell expressed their views of the artist, one trait common to both was that essential detachment from the collective, from the rest of humanity. Again, Lawrence (as well as innumerable romantic

poets) had said more or less the same, as indeed, it was his example that moved Miller to proclaim: "When a man becomes fully conscious of his powers, his role, his destiny, he is an artist ... he has become permanently out of step with the rest of humanity"(Corr.46). Durrell expressed this view in similar terms in his Hamlet-letters to Miller and in The Black Book. Here a painfully acute awareness of loneliness is a precondition not only for exile but for real art as well(4). He wrote to Miller: "And the artist finds that the people are wrong. The driving force behind him is his self-isolation, the dislocation of the societal instinct" (Corr.18). Once again, Miller and Durrell seemed noisily outmoded. The 'societal instinct' was at a premium in the 1930s, while the individualistic modernist impulse of the previous decade had all but disappeared. Edmund Wilson said in 1931: "Axel's world of the private imagination in isolation from the life of society seems to have been exploited and explored as far as for the present is possible" (AxC.292). The artistic debate had come to focus increasingly on the question of the artist's role in society, resulting in what Putnam called a "mid-decade rush for the 'proletarian' band-wagon" (Putnam 114f). Although the Marxist alternative offered to the returned exiles not only an all-embracing 'myth', but also the warmth of collectivity and the thrill of social action, Miller and Durrell did not participate. Annette Baxter has correctly pointed out that the "expatriate of the thirties must then have been little affected by contemporary social and political movements". And she added that, in "abandoning his country at that time, he was expressing not only his dissatisfaction with America, but also with collectivist ideals" (ABHM.6). As we will have occasion to show, this applied to Miller and to Durrell with a vengeance.

If the artist stands outside and, obviously, above society and human relations, there exist, nevertheless, some cultural settings which are more hostile to his self-realisation than others. It is perhaps a measure of the intensity of their belief that England and America obstructed the artist's self-realisation (or the sign of a certain petrification of vision) that as late as the 1960s, at the zenith of their success, they reaffirmed this antagonistic 'myth' with unabated vigor[4] Miller pointed out that "America is essentially against the artist, that the enemy of America is the artist, because he stands

for individuality and creativeness, and that's un-American somehow" (PR.178). And Durrell said: "I think that the real 'foreigner' in Anglo-Saxon society is the artist, whether domestic or not. As an artist one is a nègre blanc"(Moore 156). Their disaffection with Anglo-American society's attitude to the artist remained virtually unchanged through the decades. America, Miller wrote in Cancer "is the very incarnation of doom"(Cancer 100), especially for the artist, and over the years he did not change that view.

Having said that, one must add that Durrell's rage against England subsided somewhat as time went by. A hostile setting, blown up to quasi-mythical proportions, was most useful for the young man seeking to define himself, but it was also somewhat restrictive. Even in the 1930s, Durrell's attitude was anything but straightforward. In the heart of The Black Book he speaks of wanting to revive a "whole dormant Platonic principle which, in its essence, is England". He wanted to become "in a sense, the first Englishman"(BB.135f). Like Lawrence, he was against England and for an ideal England at the same time, and more: fulminating in his letters against "those sons of bitches in literary England" (Corr.6), he got on splendidly with precisely these 'sons of bitches' several months later when they had accepted him (Corr.113). A 'platonic', idealised England was pitched against a half-mythical "English Death", and both hovered somewhat arrogantly over the complexity of quotidian life. In spite of his denunciations of England, in spite of a peculiar detachment from its day to day realities, perhaps the consequence of something Connolly called "the dépaysé out-of-the-world onlooker feeling" (CCJM.224), Durrell felt no hesitation in proclaiming: "I'm as English as Shakespeare's birthday, and proud of it"(5). Although only one of his books actually dealt with England in particular, namely The Black Book, it is true what David Gascoyne pointed out: "there will always remain in him, at the core, something 'thoroughly British'" (Labrys.v.69).

Miller too loathed America and loved it as well. He too was 'thoroughly American', dreaming at times the dangerous dream of the expatriate, imagining America in Cancer "always there waiting for you, unchanged, unspoiled, a big patriotic open space with cows and sheep and tender-

hearted men ready to bugger everything in sight, man, woman, or beast" (Cancer 210). He did add: "It doesn't exist, America. It's a name you give to an abstract idea..."(ibid.). Paradoxically, however, his inner eye remained fixed on the United States - to a much larger extent even than Durrell's on England. As J.D.Brown has pointed out: "In Miller's last years as exile he returns in his art to the life in America which he deliberately rejected when he crossed the Atlantic"(DLB.283). Most of his books deal with his life in America, and all were written in his native idiom. Indeed, as we have seen, he returned to the land he called "senile, foolish, idiotic"(SatW.193) in 1940 and remained there until his death in 1980. In this sense, perhaps, he did fit into the pattern of expatriation and return described by Cowley above, after all...

In the 1930s, however, when the "exiles and refugees of art were all of them home again"(ER.284), both Miller and Durrell were living abroad; according to their half-myth, the idea of returning "home" was abhorrent, a nightmare more than anything else. Although they thoroughly enjoyed and even needed the occasional visit to Engand or America respectively, although they always kept an eye on the London and New York literary scene, and wrote in English, the black and white system of 'myth' required that they paint these places as dark and evil: "home, with all the ugly, evil, sinister connotations which the word contains for a restless soul"(ACN.10).

Miller and Durrell knew that it was not only the bourgeois world that regarded them as failures, outlaws and freaks, but large sections of the literary and artistic avant-garde as well. Miller wrote to his friend Alfred Perlès in 1935: "The expatriates are anathema to the Americans, particularly to the Communists" (ARNY.10). But they were proud of their exile. Neither of them would have denied, especially at the beginning of their life abroad, that they had escaped to a more congenial environment. Referring to the cultural 'desert', which was America, Miller wrote to the German vitalist philosopher Count Keyserling: "You just flee it, if you have the strength. The Americans regard this attitude as weak; for them the expatriate is an escapist. To me it would appear a weakness to remain in a hopeless situation, in a condition one has outgrown"(6). The notion of remaining in those

hostile surroundings, which they described with verve and diligence and a curious love, struck them, so they implied, as absurd and perhaps even suicidal.

"Exile" implied not only alienation and emigration but also the notion of an alternative place of residence where estrangement might possibly be defeated. The hope for self-liberation, self-discovery and self-fulfillment in new surroundings was often attached to this term. For a whole 'lost generation' of Americans, for the heroes of Durrell's generation too, the fixed idea, the almost mythical destination, as it were, was 'Europe', and Miller and Durrell did not feel otherwise. The question is: why Europe, why continental Europe? What did Europe mean to them; what terms and values were associated with this word? In short, what was their idea of Europe in the years preceding the expatriate experience? Most of the information concerning the early conception of Europe in their various minds issues from retrospective descriptions, from interviews, letters and books, whose precise subject frequently is the dichotomy between pre-European days of disgust and a happier Paris/Mediterranean present. Hardly ideal objective reportage, these sources of auto-biographical romance nevertheless give a clear picture of what Durrell and Miller felt the ego-protagonists of their books thought about "Europe" in the time preceding their exile. Furthermore, it must be emphasised, that although Miller lived there for almost a decade, and despite some disappointments especially during the final years in Paris, in his mind the idea of Europe, changed as little as his antagonistic view of America.

A first question which comes to mind is: where did this myth of Europe come from? What were the materials Miller's imagination would draw on and mould into an image of the promised land across the Atlantic? We might point the reader to Tropic of Capricorn, a "condensation of Miller's experiences before expatriation"(DLB.291), or to The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy. Out of that Gargantuan mass of auto-biographical communication, several aspects might be singled out for consideration.

I have mentioned the literary tradition of exile to which Miller was most alive and which certainly influenced his perception of America. An avid reader, he was also conscious of the literary expression of what Annette Baxter phrased thus: "To declare for Europe was to declare for life lived on a profounder level of experience"(ABHM.4). Or as Malcolm Cowley put it in the eigth point in the "system of ideas" he remembered circulating in Greenwich Village as early as 1920:

> 'They do things better in Europe'. England and Germany have the wisdom of old cultures; the Latin peoples have admirably preserved their pagan heritage. By expatriating himself, by living in Paris, Capri or the South of France, the artist can break the puritan shackles, drink, live freely and be wholly creative.(ER.60f)

Miller was familiar with this lost generation tradition epitomised in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, a book which he describes himself discussing in Nexus (Nexus 201). Reading accounts about the American experience in Europe, accounts that reached back to James, perhaps even to Irving and Hawthorne, was less important, though, than sensing repeatedly, as Miller put it, the kindred spirit in European writers like Strindberg, Bergson, Hamsun, and Dostoievski. "My greatest influences were Dostoievski, Nietzsche and Elie Faure"(CosE.349). In his New York books Miller often describes how on discovering a new European writer he experienced a profound sense of affinity and belonging. Symptomatically, one of the very first things he wrote was "a long essay on Nietzsche's Anti-Christ (CosE.346). Moreover, what Miller described as the "most important encounter of my life", with Emma Goldman in San Diego just before World War I, opened up, as he said, "the whole world of European culture for me and gave a new impetus to my life, as well as direction" (CosE.347). It was thanks to a work by Emma Goldman on European theatre that he became "widely read in the European drama", and knew Hauptmann, Ibsen, Toller, Hasenclever, Wedekind and Hoffmansthal, Schnitzeler and Suderman, "the European dramatists before the English or American"(7). In New York he frequented plays by dramatists from the Old World, including one by the Čapek brothers (BiML.306). Who would have thought then that Karel Čapek was to be one of the contributors to a magazine Miller would edit, to Delta? Europe and European art, the famous Armory Show in

1913 with Duchamps' "Nude Descending a Staircase", for example, were constant topics of conversation (Nexus 143). Travellers to Europe were of intrinsic interest for him: Emil Schnellock, for instance, who "planted the seed in me" (Nexus 285), in whose "eyes the wonder and the magic of it still glowed" (ibid.). In "Just a Brooklyn Boy", Schnellock recalled the intensity of Miller's fascination: "On my wall there was a map of Europe. Under his scrutiny it takes on a new significance. It becomes a living continent, an organism which breathes, vibrates, speaks" (HR.12). But if Schnellock revealed new vistas for his reveries, it was Miller's second wife June who bestowed on the dream of Europe a sudden, terrible reality: one day Miller apparently returned home to find that she had departed for the Old World (Capricorn 43). Several months later she returned, fully convinced that Europe was his real home. "Val, it's what you've dreamed of all your life. You belong there"(Nexus 180) she said, and anyone who has read The Rosy Crucifixion, Tropic of Capricorn or Anais Nin's 1932-1934 journal will remember the exceptional influence this woman had on Miller. "'We've got to go back', she said, forgetting that 'we' had not gone there together"(Nexus 181).

Miller's positive dream of Europe was also shaped by his experience of Europe in America. Many of the New York immigrant groups retained their native customs and mentality, and this face of the city was perhaps the only one Miller found tolerable. He almost felt at home in those traditional communities, though less among his Teutonic cousins, than in the Jewish quarters: "In New York what I like best is the ghetto. It gives me a sense of life. The people of the ghetto are foreigners; when I am in their midst I am no longer in New York but amidst the peoples of Europe."(ACN.18). A short holiday in Montreal with June added to his foretaste of European, of French life (Nexus 277f).

George Orwell once blamed the generation of Eliot and Yeats for projecting their hopes and ideals far away from their immediate reality. Miller disagreed. Orwell said: "Our eyes are directed to Rome, to Byzantium, to Montparnasse, to Mexico, to the Etruscans, to the subconscious, to the solar plexus - to everything except the places where things are actually happening" (CE.i.557). Miller, however, knew of

the inspirational, vital power of Utopia and he followed their example, with 'Europe' the object of his reveries, of his "Heimweh" (Nexus 143). 'Europe' was the answer, the patent recipe. "Paris will solve our problems"(Nexus 143). In his 1936 Black Spring, Miller noted with pathos:

> I am a man of the old world, a seed that was transplanted by the wind, a seed which failed to blossom in the mushroom oasis of America. I belong on the heavy tree of the past. My allegiance, physical and spiritual, is with the men of Europe. (BS.29)

Miller's projection of Europe was selective, subjective, his own needs and frustrations converging upon it freely. He focussed his eyes on aspects which supported his dream, rejected those that did not. The Europe of the 1920s had little in common with Miller's 'Europe' - but Miller was aware of this (or so he remembered). Still, he stressed the primacy of his vision, a reality which was a different one from Orwell's. "Even though you be not all that I now imagine, long for, and desperately need, grant me at least the illusion of enjoying this fair contentment which the mention of your name invites" (Nexus 284).

What, however, caused "this fair contentment", what imaginings or ideas? As we have noted, it is difficult to separate his pre-1928 view from his later conception, especially as the tendency to give heightened meaning on France and Paris did not subside after he began his down and out life there. We have already mentioned some of the characteristics of his European 'myth'. As Gertrude Stein's little book Paris, France of 1940 made clear, France had come to stand for freedom of thought and action, openess to art and experiment, liberalness and tolerance, respect for the individual, for privacy, harmony between tradition and modernity, hospitality, humanity and genuinely cosmopolitan culture. "And that is what made Paris and France the natural background of the art and literature of the twentieth century"(8).

Miller returned to the United States in 1935 and described this visit in Aller Retour New York. It was an enthusiastic celebration of France, surpassed only by the retrospective Remember to Remember, a book which Miller wrote in renewed exile from Europe in the early

1940s, heavy with the Heimweh mentioned above. Both exultations may be said to approximate to the uncritical dream he dreamt of Europe in the 1920s. France was human, America inhuman. "I say Europe is not dead", he wrote to Emil Schnellock in the early days of his sojourn in Paris: "It is America that is dead"(SatW.198). A passport form asked for the reasons for visiting France, and Miller said he would write: "because I want to become a human being again"(ARNY.30). Again Miller no more than reaffirmed the attitudes of the lost generation, a number of whom, including his later cronies Walter Lowenfels and Hilaire Hiler, as well as the Delta contributor Kay Boyle, had responded to a 1928 questionnaire "Why do Americans live in Europe?" by praising France and attacking the United States. Miller repeated the old expatriate song that France was a country which guaranteed individual freedom, its rich crop of artists the product of a fruitful soil, climate, landscape, language. The French spirit, he affirmed, was mature, wise, civilised and alert; France, despite or rather because of the chaos, anarchy and squalor reigning there, was a garden of treasures teeming with life which could not be equalled by an America in the throes of the hygiene revolution. "France occupies a spiritual latitude which connects the vital past with the vital future", he wrote to Michael Fraenkel in 1935: "Her two-thousand years old kiss may be abhorrent and repulsive to you, but it is still a kiss and not an act of cannibalism"(9).

It may perhaps suffice at this point to say that the most crucial term in Miller's vision of European life was and remained "different". His 'Europe' was the opposite of unholy America. Dreaming of being in Europe he wrote: "I was alone but not the least bit lonely. The air smelled different, the people looked different. Even the trees and flowers were different. How I craved that - something different!" (Nexus 105). Perhaps the most important difference, however, was the assumption that in Europe the artist was not a pariah, but an accepted member of society. France promised, in other words, a victory over stifling estrangement, promised a home. Again Miller reaffirmed the great myth of France, which Cyril Connolly was to refer to in the war years, saying: "in no other country is Art so highly considered, and artists left so benevolently alone" (CCCP.87). Connolly added significantly that France had been a place "where everyone can, if he wishes,

live, and live without guilt and without a feeling of expatriation" (CCCP.87). That was precisely it, and Miller's experience more or less confirmed these views.

In the 1920s, of course, it was still a dream for him. As his biographer Jay Martin said "he constructed a labyrinthine, magical Paris which became a significant part of his dream-life" (Martin 138). Poring over a Paris street directory he was surprised by the number of streets named after writers, philosophers, painters and musicians (Nexus 151). Miller imagined, or rather: later wrote that he imagined, the mind of the typical European to be artistic, Europe swarming with

> intellects trained (from the cradle) to mingle poetry with fact and deed, spirits which kindle at the mention of a nuance, and soar and soar, encompassing the most sublime flights, yet touching everything with wit, with malice, with erudition, with the salt and the spice of the worldly.(Nexus 284)

Europe, and especially France, was elevated to extraordinary heights, an inverse index of his alienation from society and perhaps from himself as well.

The dream of Europe, however, was also necessary psychological precondition for that step into the uncertainty of geographical exile. Miller could scarcely afford a prolonged stay in Europe, but he felt he had to go. Arriving in Paris with ten dollars in his pocket, he was burning with the hope that Europe would fulfill his need: "to be understood, to be accepted"(Nexus 101); that it would prove to be, after all, the "home of the artist, the vagabond, the dreamer" (ibid). He was not disappointed. "Europe is my homeland. I am with Europe always. I have found my homeland"(SatW.19). After struggling through penniless years, frequently on the verge of starvation, disillusioned and hardened, Miller nevertheless felt at home in Paris, telling his friend Alfred Perlès: "I say now what I have never said in America: I feel a profound contentment"(ARNY.140). He was an exile but at home, and in the words of Connolly "without a feeling of expatriation" (CCCP.87).

Connolly also said that France allowed the artist, the English writer in particular, to throw off his "social personality", "his old social or academic skin", for it offered him "all that is most rare and delightful in life"(CCCP.87f). It offered him, he said, "the Mediterranean for a sun-lamp, and Paris as his oxygen tent"(ibid.88). In his 1959 preface Lawrence Durrell described The Black Book as the consequence "of a long period of despair and frustration". He said it was the violent attempt to discard "the cultural swaddling clothes which I symbolized here as 'the English Death'"(BB.9). His protagonist's dramatic flight to 'Europe', to the Mediterranean sun-lamp, in this case Greece, was an integral part of the argument for self-liberation and self-discovery, which bears a close resemblance to that of Miller's Tropic of Cancer. Viewed superficially from the biographical aspect, however, Lawrence Durrell's emigration from England seems to have been undertaken under less existential pressure, inner or outer, than his vociferous diatribes against "the anglo-saxon psyche"(BB.10) might suggest.

The Black Book's protagonist, the thinly veiled mouthpiece of young Lawrence Durrell, made a special point of his deep inner solitude, his isolation. But in reality Lawrence Durrell, it seems, was not alone. He was with his wife and his family, and this company was more than stimulating. As his old friend Alan Thomas has written: "nobody who has known the family at all well could deny that their company was 'life-enhancing'". And he added: "Amid the gales of Rabelaisian laughter, the wit, Larry's songs accompanied by piano or guitar, the furious arguments and animated conversations going on far into the night, I felt that life had taken on a new dimension"(Spirit 24). Of this family happiness there is no trace whatsoever in The Black Book. In a revealing little episode which Alan Thomas has reported, Durrell decided to marry secretly. Oddly, there was no obvious reason for doing so, for as Alan Thomas remembered: "nobody could feel themselves in opposition to so humanely tolerant a woman as Mrs.Durrell - who would have rejoiced in the wedding anyway" (Spirit 25). On his escape to Greece, Lawrence Durrell, however, was accompanied not only by his beautiful wife Nancy, his brothers and sister, but also by his mother.

Lawrence Durrell

The Black Book outlines a dramatic escape, but, as Alan Thomas noted, there were in fact "no ties binding the Durrell family to England" (Spirit 26). The reasons for going seem to have been humanely prosaic. A "brief period" in Paris sometime in the early part of the decade persuaded Lawrence Durell, and he in turn his family, "who were dying of catarrh, that it was necessary to get out of England for a breath of air and see some new landscapes and places" (PR.261). Greece, according to the Paris Review interview, seemed "a good idea" (ibid.), and after letters from a friend in Corfu arrived describing in alluring colours life on the island, the whole famly (with Lawrence Durrell and his wife as vanguard) decided to move south.

There were ample reasons for choosing the Mediterranean, for selecting a sunny island in the Ionian. Aware of a certain branch of his literary ancestry, the romantic poets mentioned above, Gilbert Murray, Norman Douglas, Aldous Huxley, Lawrence and the admired Robert Graves, still living and working on Majorca with Laura Riding, Durrell (who only read Miller after arriving in Corfu) may have sensed what he later put in the words: "The Mediterranean is the capital, the heart, the sex organ of Europe"(Alyn 38). But there were more material reasons as well. As he remembered, it was more or less by chance that Corfu was selected: "I might easily have picked some more remote Greek island" (ibid.). But in fact, apart from the fact that Durrell had a number of friends resident there, Corfu, as he explains in a 1934 letter to George Wilkinson, was "the ideal place to use as a base for Mediterranean exploration"(Spirit 29). Random or not, it was an excellent choice and it was cheap to live there as well. Alan Thomas has said: "It is difficult to believe that any place in the world today can rival Corfu, as it was then, as an elysium for a young writer and a young painter"(Spirit 26). Especially since Greece was "the only place where one could live on next to nothing then"(Alyn 37). The cost of living on the island was so low that his and his wife's private income of about 200 pounds a year ensured that they could spend their time as they wished, writing, painting, basking in the sun. They rented a house, kept a maid as well as a sailing boat (Spirit 26). Durrell later pointed out that this life in Corfu was harsh, cold in winter, lacking a reliable postal service. Still, the reader of his nostalgic Prospero's Cell and his brothers' My Family

and other Animals will easily recall the carefree happiness which blessed the life of the family on Corfu. Durrell: "It was harsh, but the harshness made it enjoyable" (Alyn 38).

There were reasons enough, in short, for choosing Corfu. The question, however, is: why should a young poet retreat to an admittedly idyllic, yet remote, almost pastoral village life? Why escape to an island which was isolated, in his own words, at "the end of the world"(Alyn 38), far away from the bustling centres of European life, the metropolitan hearts of modern art? Durrell saw himself as standing in the modernist tradition; the heroes of his generation were the giants of modernism, but modernism was essentially "an art of cities", as Malcolm Bradbury has said, and there were no cities on Corfu (Modernism 96). Why did Durrell want to live on an island far more primitive and isolated? "I lived like a fisherman in Corfu" (Alyn 38); and the question remains why?

It is true that, despite his recollection that "travel or bottles of whisky were out of the question" (Alyn 37), Durrell visited England and the "oxygen-tent" of Paris two or three times in his Corfu years. He was strongly attracted, after all, by the literary "fen of adders" (Corr.150) in London, by the frenzied activity he felt emanating form Miller's Villa Seurat studio. He participated in this life, corresponded voluminously with Miller and others. He also wrote about London, a dying modernist city in The Black Book. He participated but at a distance. And there were reasosns for this.

Voluntary expatriation is always a gesture full of meaning. Just as the time when Miller and Durrell chose to emigrate, the politicised 1930s, was indicative of a fundamental distrust of collective activity, so the choice of their place of exile bespoke some deeper attitude to the outer world. Life in a small community is probably less fraught with complexities and responsibilities than life in an obscurely anonymous social organism like a great city. Life in a small community in a country whose depth of culture and tradition is not one's own would appear less complex still. Life in a village, in a foreign environment to boot, whether on a farm in New Mexico or on an Ionian island, consequently makes the most minimal demands on one's

social conscience imaginable (and it did not matter that in 1936 General Metaxas established a rigorous military dictatorship in Greece). To opt, as Durrell did, for such a life was another manifestation of the desire for perspicuity, for familiarity, the desire to comprehend one's surroundings. It was the choice of the mythographer. At the same time a choice such as this might also be read as a conscious rejection of the modern world, and as an unwillingness to confront, except from a distance, the daily realities of civilisation, its complex city culture, that "horrid world outside" as Durrell once called it (Corr.11).

Durrell was not the only poet who sought a more congenial literary climate than that which a politicised literary London had to offer in those days. But unlike Pound or Graves, Durrell was still young, his experience of the city life not very profound. He wrote with flamboyance about London and the "English Disease", about the provinciality and puritanism of his countrymen, and yet Miller's suspicion (Oct.1949) makes one wonder: "Sometimes I think that you, Larry, never really knew what it was to live in our modern age of asphalt and chemicals. To grow up in the street, to speak the language of the voyou"(Corr.275). Indeed, compared to Miller, Durrell's experience of the city seems negligible. His Black Book compatriots significantly inhabit a clearly circumscribed world, a shabby London hotel, circumscribed like a village on an Ionian island. A critic like Geoffrey Grigson, a firm opponent of any form of "poetic isolation" (NV.xxxi/xxxii.2), would almost certainly have levelled the charge of escapism at Durrell. Put more positively, to live on an island, was ultimately the logical, physical concomitant of the mythic imagination, the ideal situation for the inner exile seeking to triumph over alienation, a place where he might aggrandise his wounded 'self', and a situation in which the artist might operate with very little disturbance from the outside. For Durrell Corfu was an aesthetic locale.

One is almost tempted to say that Miller's life in the American and the expatriate community in Paris, a community whose connections with the French life around it were, as Geoffrey Wolff, author of Black Sun, would have it (DLB.xiff), very limited, was in principle

analogous to Durrell's insular exile in Greece. Miller's life might also seem the logical, physical concomittant to the mythic imagination, the ideal condition of one seeking to 'belong' (there was nothing there to reject him), and to assert his 'self' (here, as on an island, there was little to qualify it) and to write. But Miller was a city man, he had searched out and become part of Paris, as Blaise Cendrars remarked in the first review of Cancer that was ever published, "en découvrant Paris, en respirant Paris, en dévorant Paris, il en avale, furieux, et en mange, vomit et compisse la ville" (FJTHM.73f). His experience of the metropolis was adequate to that of his immediate predecessors, the modernists and their 'art of cities'.

The notion of "poetic isolation" as a hallmark of the Villa Seurat, however, is worth bearing in mind, and I will return to discuss what appear immediate consequences of the exile's reduced outer world and his mythic imagination, that proliferation of 'self', the almost excessive insistence on the individual, as well as an emphatically anti-social outlook. Indeed, as we shall see, for Durrell and Miller Corfu and Paris were not only aesthetic locales but political ones as well.

But here we will discuss only some of the more literary aspects of exle and the mythopoeic imagination. In Tropic of Cancer of 1934 one can find the gruff remark "that Paris takes hold of you, grabs you by the balls, you might say, like some lovesick bitch who'd rather die than let you get out of her hands"(Cancer 176). Paris attracted and fascinated. When Miller arrived in 1930 the world economic depression had not even reached its peak, prospects were more than drab, and as Michael Fraenkel has noted in his splendid opening to "The Genesis of the Tropic of Cancer", there was fear and apprehension all about. "It was seen everywhere, in the faces of all ... It was seen in the faces of the émigrés, the Russians, the Germans, the Poles, the Roumanians and Hungarians, the Italians" (HR.39). And he adds:

> It was seen in the faces of the last of the expatriates who had fled the America that refused to be born à la Whitman, and now, stranded in the city of eternal light, their money run dry at the source, warmed themselves in the charcoal glow of the brasiers in the Café Dôme.(HR.39)

Miller had come to a Paris which was no longer the "supra city of Modernism" of earlier decades (Modernism 103), the wild and dollarful metropolis of the Jazz Age. Malcolm Cowley noted: "Paris was no longer the center of everything 'modern' and aesthetically ambitious in American literature", and he commented that the little magazines of the new decade were "being published in Brooklyn, Beverly Hills, Chicago, Davenport, Iowa and Windsor, Vermont"(ER.284). For Miller, however, Paris was still "the city of eternal light" and it was always more than the sum of its real negative and its real positive aspects.

It was Paris the real and Paris the dream - even for the lumpenproletarian bum stumbling through its shabbiest quarters and desperate for a meal. Why? Because it was in Paris and not in Brooklyn or Davenport, Iowa that Miller could feel and live his 'real self', and it was in his Paris book, Tropic of Cancer, that he found his voice and his talent as the writer he always wanted to be. "He would insist on staying Henry Miller. That was the meaning of his flight from America", said Michael Fraenkel, and Paris opened this possibility: "He came to Paris, and would stay in Paris, because he was determined now more than ever to gather and integrate and fuse round that in himself which he recognized as truly his"(HR.44).

Miller and Durrell both experienced their surroundings intensely. The American's colourful accounts of Greek landscape in The Colossus of Maroussi are paralleled by Durrell's novels and poems, which often invoke a powerful spirit of place. Drawing on a vast assortment of esoteric study that ranges from Taoism and Jungian psychology to the genius loci concept as revealed in South Wind and Sea and Sardinia, Durrell and Miller frequently attributed to a locale, to a romanticised Alexandria, for instance, a magical power which actually enveloped and sometimes even determined the thoughts and actions of its inhabitants. Although the Colossus of Maroussi was only written in 1940, and the Alexandria Quartet much later still, similar perceptions of landscape informed much of their pre-war fiction. The Black Book, as I have said, programmatically contrasted the stifling effect of urban life in England with a harmony between man and nature possible in the Mediterranean world (10). This harmony was a mystical one, the

depiction of which necessarily requires of the reader that he cross the boundary which separates the rational and the irrational. In Miller's view these mystical invocations were to be taken quite literally. In his memorable coda to Tropic of Cancer, Miller, contemplating Paris and the Seine, illustrated this transcending step.

> Christ, before my eyes there shimmered such a golden peace that only a neurotic could dream of turning his head away. So quietly flows the Seine that one hardly notices its presence. It is always there, quiet and unobtrusive, like a great artery running through the human body. In the wonderful peace that fell over me it seemed as if I had climbed to the top of a high mountain; for a little while I would be able to look around me, to take in the meaning of the landscape.... The sun is setting. I feel this river flowing through me - its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate. The hills gently girdle it about: its course is fixed.(Cancer 317f)

One might say that to the 'primitive' and to the myth-maker landscape is never a neutral background, but rather a vessel which takes on the shape of inner struggles. For Miller, Paris was such a vessel, one in which events and people always assumed heightened (or caricatural) significance. In Paris, he proclaimed: "Everything is raised to apotheosis" (Cancer 35f).

Paris was more than just a city: "More eternal than Rome, more splendorous than Niniveh. The very navel of the world to which, like a blind and faltering fool, one crawls back on hands and knees"(Cancer 86). The vessel which was Miller's Paris, one must add, was far from being constituted of positive elements only. In his books, especially Cancer, scathing descriptions of Paris are no rarities, and in one of his earliest short stories, "Mademoiselle Claude", he writes: "Paris looks to me like a big, ugly chancre. The streets are gangrened. Everybody has it - if it isn't clap it's syphilis. All Europe is diseased" (WoH.148). Nonetheless, Miller did not reject the squalor and the dirt he found there. On the contrary, he quickly learned to accept it, to embrace it even. In his Aller Retour New York letter to Perlès he wrote: "Deterioration sets in quicker than in America. Physical deterioration. But the soul expands. Things are rotting away and in this quick rot the ego buries itself like a seed and blooms" (ARNY.134). And alluding to the sense of belonging he experienced in France, he added significantly: "The ego is rooted, the soil well

manured. Instead of a million towering walls there is one great wall, the Chinese wall which the French have built out of their own blood. Within this wall a security and serenity unknown to America" (ARNY.134). As J.D.Brown put it in his contribution to the Dictionary of Literary Biography: "Paris became the capital of individual health in a powerfully rendered landscape of cancer, cataclysm, and death" (DLB.283). Cancer thrives on the tension existing between the "death" and deterioration so vividly delineated and the tenor fundamental to all of Miller's writings on Paris and France: one of acceptance, affirmation, assent.

Moreover, if the goal was a sense of perspicuity and meaning, the kind of overstatements Miller employed to describe Paris are not incongruent as a means of achieving the clarity the mythopoeic imagination is after. Hyperbole and contradiction may exact a price in finesse and differentiation of depiction, but Miller's 'primitive' descriptions of the city do have the advantage that they are almost always alive and passionate and it is symptomatic (and somewhat of a cliché) that Paris was often likened to a woman. "I go forward to meet Paris as a man goes forward to meet his mistress" Miller wrote to Emil Schnellock. Paris was a "vast, deep, spiritual woman" (SatW.196). Of course, Paris was also "a lovesick bitch" (Cancer 176), or as Miller put it in another part of Cancer: "Paris is like a whore. From a distance she seems ravishing, you can't wait until you have her in your arms. And five minutes later you feel empty, disgusted with yourself"(Cancer 211). The point is that the portrait of Paris was never sober or indifferent, never without life or tension, like that of a loved person, always more than the real. He was aware of the other side as well, of course, the viciousness, and dangers of life in France, and in Cancer he lets his friend Filmore voice disillusioned misgivings about the French: "Underneath it's all dead; there's no feeling, no sympathy, no friendship. They're selfish to the core. They think of nothing but money, money, money. And so goddamned respectable, so bourgeois!" (Cancer 306). Still, he did not mind, he was a true exile, as Samuel Putnam would have said, Putnam, whose important expatriate memoir with the revealing title Paris Was Our Mistress spoke of "a deep ingrowing love for a city and a land that were not ours". This was a love which only the "true 'expatriate' felt and

which came to be inexctricably and more or less inarticulately intertwined with the reasons that he gave himself or others for leaving America or for staying on in France" (Putnam 52). Miller's work was one long revilement of America, one long tribute to France, and especially in the latter, he was successful. "No American writer in Paris during the thirties captured so completely the experience of his generation as Henry Miller"(DLB.282). In pre-war books and stories on Paris, especially in Tropic of Cancer, replete with so much disgust and hopelessness, Miller accomplished something different: his private love-songs, his attempt to hear his own voice, to express his personal variant of the old dream of exile, these became the epitome, one might even say, a 'myth', of a whole world of expatriates. Miller, in the words of Samuel Putnam, "summed up for us as no one eles has the expatriate's Paris of the second phase: and I think it may be said that the Tropic of Cancer is to that phase what The Sun Also Rises is to the preceding one"(Putnam 115f).

Notes

1. ABHM.2; Tindall 18.
2. Corr.60; MFS.xiii.3.319.
3. Jerusalem. chap. I, sect. 10. The following line is also interesting: "I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create".
4. Corr.26ff,49ff.
5. Moore 163. "Però, son sempre inglese" (Lawrence) (DHLSL.143).
6. IntHML.v.14; ABHM.12.
7. CosE.347; BiML 306; Martin 39.
8. ParFr.17; Hoffman 76; Campos 240.
9. Hamlet 34; ARNY.131.
10. BB.57,158; Encounter.xiii.6.67.

II. Alfred Perlès and Henry Miller: Protean Exile and Patriot of the 14th Ward

In the opening paragraphs of "Inside the Whale", that seminal essay on Henry Miller and the literature of the 1930s, George Orwell described in vivid terms the American invasion of Paris in the early 1920s, the invaders "such a swarm of artists, writers, students, dilettanti, sight-seers, debauchees and plain idlers as the world has probably never seen"(CE.i.541). There were certain quarters, said Orwell, in which these tourists of art may even have "outnumbered the working population"(ibid.). And he added that at one point Paris harboured around 30000 painters, "most of them impostors". Paris in the 1920s, as in the decades before, was a gravitational centre which drew into its circuit not only the ambulant visitors from the New World, but tourists and fugitives from other countries as well, artists and adventurers, businessmen and bohemians, wanderers and political exiles. "It is no accident that propels people like us to Paris" Miller said in Tropic of Cancer, and with "people like us" he meant not only his fellow Americans, but Germans, Russians, Czechs, Hungarians, Roumanians, Poles, Italians, Spaniards, Belgians, Austrians and many others (Cancer 35f).

It is true that Americans "following the dollar", as Malcolm Cowley's disparaging poem "Valuta" went, commanded the scene in the Fitzgeraldian twenties, and as Alfred Perlès noted this hardly changed in the following decade: "The American element predominated" (Ren.187). Still, though Orwell's recollection that in the 1930s "the huge Montparnasse cafés which only ten years ago were filled till the small hours by hordes of shrieking poseurs have turned into darkened tombs in which there are not even any ghosts" (CE.i.541), was a gross exaggeration, the number of Americans living in Paris did dwindle remarkably in the Depression years. At the same time the number of political refugees from Central and Eastern Europe increased markedly. Even in the years before the Depression, however, there were significant numbers of Continental Europeans living in Paris, in the shadow, perhaps, of the legendary and monied "Lost Generation", but existent nevertheless. Sometimes, as in the case of Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe, of Tristan Tzara and Constantin Brancusi, of Max Ernst

and Picasso, Dali and others, they achieved celebrity as well. Many remained nameless. To those who actually entered the Villa Seurat orbit, we will return in the following sections. In this chapter, however, a Central European is to be introduced, a writer and wanderer, exile and voyou, who was not only Henry Miller's best friend in the Parisian years but also the Booster's owner and its managing editor. His name was Alfred Perlès, and his aliases were Alf and Joey and Joe and Fredl. He was also the infamous Carl of Tropic of Cancer and Quiet Days in Clichy. Perlès' itinerary to France, his years in Paris, his removal to England in 1938, these will be scrutinised, with a special regard to his central friendship to Henry Miller, as well as the important differences in mode and character of their exile.

An Austrian by birth, Alfred Perlès may be described as a veritable paradigm of the displaced artist, the disenchanted and disinherited whom Gunther Stuhlmann described in the preface to the letters of Miller to Anais Nin (LtAN.13). Perlès was the deraciné artist par excellence, an exile who, in the words of Henry Miller, had lived the nine lives of the cat, adaptable, with numerous identities and roles, hardly looking back to his past, putting down roots wherever the winds took him (Remember 191). In 1968 Perlès noted in an epilogue to a new edition of Miller's amusing begging letter What Are You Going to Do About Alf?: "Henry has always had a tendency of attributing to me qualities and virtues which I either never possessed or which I was blithely unaware of possessing"(Alf Letter np.). As far as his ability to adapt to new situations and new enviroments was concerned, however, Miller's characterisation appears corroborated. Shortly after he left France in the winter of 1938 and just before he discovered in England a new (and permanent) home, Perlès himself said: "My tragedy and my salvation consist in belonging to no race, to no nation. I have only a great capacity for floating, for being adrift. My roots are cut, I am one with the cosmos"(RT.21). Both Miller and the photographer Halasz Brassai, one of his earliest Montparnasse friends, pointed out how Perlès was possessed of a changeable personality - even in day to day life. His character was made up of many contradictory traits; he could be coarse, cowardly and selfish the one moment, sensitive, generous and resolute the next. "Little Alf blows hot and cold, is by turns sly and disarming, loud and taciturn, cruel and gentle, blunt and

Alfred Perlès

delicate" said Michael Fraenkel in 1935 while discussing Perlès' contribution to the Hamlet correspondence, and he went on to list the Austrian's contradictory traits for a page or more (Hamlet 35f). Hilaire Hiler, another acquaintance remembered him as "a man of typical European culture and considerable sophistication" (IntHMl.v.7), while the critic Waverly Root said he was "an insignificant, servile little man who tried to be ingratiating but aroused in me a rather unpleasant reaction" (WRMC.7W). Perlès was kaleidoscopic, a born mimic, an actor and a clown.

Miller once described himself as a seed which had not grown in America (BS.29). The flower which blossomed in Europe, however, was unmistakably of American, of Brooklyn origin. Durrell, too, was an expatriate but also 'as English as Shakespeare's birhtday', as he once said. The flower of expatriate Perlès, on the other hand, was coloured to a very large extent by the character of the soil it grew from, by his immediate surroundings, not by his past, not by some inherent native tradition. If one were to contrive a term to describe this difference, one might say that while Miller was a vernacular exile, Perlès was a protean exile. In Miller's words: "He adopts the new place, the new country, attaches himself to it passionately, takes root, defends it like a lunatic" (Ren.5). In contrast to the many "ambulant" Americans whose "expatriation was not necessarily an uprooting" (Hoffman 77), in contrast to Miller and Durrell, who, however critical, however alienated, always remained orientated on America and Britain, in contrast even to Eliot and his programmatic "return" to England, the chameleon Perlès was an exponent of an Internationale of drifters, but one who was, paradoxically, also fired by the desire to adapt to the new environment, with all his heart: it was ubi bene, ibi patria for Alfred Perlès, and this with a vengeance.

Perlès was born in Vienna in 1897. His father was of Czech origin, his mother French; his upbringing, however, was German (SL.40). Of good family and, as he noted, "with a considerable array of Jewish grandmothers" (RT.15), he attended the "Schottische Gymnasium" in the old dual monarchy's capital. He was well educated. Like Miller and like Lawrence Durrell, he too wanted to be a writer from an early age on, a man of letters. In his autobiograhical sketch My Friend Alfred

Perlès he described how, shortly before the outbreak of the first World War he had even been able to sell a synopsis for a film. He was paid the handsome sum of 300 kronen (MFAP.20f). In these memoirs Perlès said that this was the only thing he published before the war. Both Brassai and Miller mention several novels of his written in German, and in his preface to The Renegade the latter alluded to these, Perlès' indeterminable, "ghost-like" writings in his native tongue. On the first page of Sentiments Limitrophes he mentioned a number of novels which remained fragments, Luxurette and Leuchtraketen. These were apparently never published(1).

When the war broke out, young Alfred Perlès enlisted in the imperial army. He was apparently one of the youngest second lieutenants in the forces and, in the beginning, he much enjoyed the officer's life in imperial Vienna(2). Then he was sent to Rumania. According to a long chapter in Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur, which was corroborated by Samuel Putnam's recollections, it was within days that Perlès experienced what may have been a first turning point in his life. For three days and two nights he and his men, a company of machine-gunners, had been under shell-fire. The enemy was charging the position where his men were waiting for Perlès to give the command to fire. Paralysed, Perlès never gave the command. A sergeant took over and Perlès was court-martialled. "Tout d'abord, ils voulaient m'exécuter, mais ils ont change d'avis"(QeRM.174). Perlès himself confirmed what Putnam said, that he was "saved only through the influence of his family"(3). He spent the remaining years of the war in an asylum, as Miller put it, out of harm's way (Remember 202). When the armisitice came, he was set free. Happily, he had survived the war without killing anyone, as he later insisted (4). He seems to have left Vienna more or less immediately. "Vienna was dead or dying", Perlès later recalled. "Famine and the Spanish 'flu decimated the population. People spoke of nothing but ration cards and prices on the black market. Ration cards were useless because there were no rations. Money had lost its purchasing power since there was nothing to purchase" (MFAP.14). In short, as he wrote: "It was high time for me to get out of the place. I left it like a rat leaving the sinking ship"(ibid.). It is not quite clear whether this account is accurate, for his family was still well-off, and supported him for some years to

come. Indeed, the impression he later gave that he left Vienna because it was starving seems doubtful. At any rate, what he described as his itinerant years now began.

As his father or grandfather had been born in a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire that became Czechoslovakia, Perlès obtained a Czechoslovakian passport, more useful for travelling in those days than an Austrian one, though where he travelled to, and how, is not quite clear. Miller mentioned that he may have lived for a time in Berlin and Prague, that he was in Copenhagen and Amsterdam and Jugoslavia, before coming to Paris. According to later accounts it was a difficult period, countless "days of penury" (MFAP.13), and Perlès told Miller how once in Rome he went without food for ten days. Hungry and impoverished like a character from Hamsun, he struggled through Europe. Throughout this period, as he later wrote, he was "intermittently haunted by the terror of starvation" (MFAP.11). Around 1920, perhaps somewhat later, he had arrived in Paris, but, according to retrospective accounts this did not change his situation all that much (5). He was still on the verge of starving: "It's a miracle I didn't go crazy or commit murder"(MFAP.12). Miller later said that that an ordinary man would have succumbed to these vicissitudes, died of starvation, of homesickness or chagrin (Ren.6). As a matter of fact, the days of genuine poverty seem to have begun only in his third year in Paris in 1923, when his parents, who believed that their son was studying medecine at the Sorbonne but now wanted him to return to Vienna, stopped sending him money (QeRM.35). "Alors, c'était la misere..., la famine" (ibid.). Like Miller, Perlès held a great variety of jobs in order to survive, as he puts it:

> mostly odd ones: turn by turn, I was dishwasher, fortune teller, pedlar, barman, sandwichman, ghost-writer, card-sharper, guinea pig for quacks testing the effect of monkey glands, and so on and so forth.(MFHM.14)

His "gastric juices kept rumbling day and night" as he learned to live the life en marge, acquiring what he called a "wolf nature", a street instinct for survival, directed primarily at securing food, shelter, perhaps wine and women (6). When he joined up with Henry Miller in early 1930, he was scraping together a living as a journalist, writing

feature stories for various newspapers, including the Paris edition of the Chicago Tribune. He was managing, but it was not an easy life.

In What Are You Going to Do About Alf?, a comical begging letter written on behalf of his friend in September 1935, Miller described Perlès' existence in Paris as "the life of a cockroach". He did add, however, that it was " a happy life just the same"(Alf Letter 15ff). This is probably a fairly accurate description, for though some years later Miller also said that his friend had "had a rotten deal here" (Ren.5), Perlès who had mastered the marginal life, knew how to get along, and, "a stickler for good food and good wines", he was even ocassionally capable of indulging in his "aristocratic" tastes (7). Looking back on his Paris years Perlès said in a letter in early 1939 that it was here that he spent the best part of his youth: "It was a good youth, yes, despite everthing. A shadowy youth it was, with even the exhaltations overshadowed by ignorance"(RT.37). And he added: "I shall never forget what Paris has given me"(ibid.). In a long letter of valediction to Henry Miller and to France, significantly entitled "Aller Sans Retour London", Perlès described what Paris had given him: Paris was "the city of my youth"(RT.40), France his "spiritual home" for almost twenty years and French "the language of my heart"(RT 39f). Paris had also given him Henry Miller.

After his (apparently final) metamorphosis into an Englishman, Perlès asserted that even in his Paris years he had felt adrift: "Deep down I felt rootless"(Horizon.ii.12.294). Indeed, in Sentiments Limistrophes he describes his soul as "mon âme dépaysée" (SL.124). In point of fact, however, in the early years of his sojourn in France he had become a Frenchman, even "a hundred percent French" in Miller's eyes (Alf Letter 15ff). After less than three years, he said, "j'étais devenu Parisien"(SL.35). Miller and Durrell created, as it were, their own "one man culture" in exile, a kind of synthesis which drew on elements from various cultures including a heightened view of Mediterranean or French life and civilisation, but in essence they remained rooted in American and British traditions. Perlès, however, with his startling ability to feel "the spirit underlying the language", quickly imbibed, adopted completely the culture of his new home (MFAP.22). And why not, he asked many years later (in impeccable

English), as he pointed to the examples of Joseph Conrad, Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, William Saroyan and others: "Modern literary history is full of writers who adopted a foreign tongue" (MFAP.22f). If George Orwell was convinced that exile invariably meant "transferring your roots into shallower soil" (CE.i.543), Perlès disagreed. He even said:

> the adoption of a foreign tongue by the sensitive writer may be a real advantage, for it widens his consciousness, opens up new thought horizons, makes him aware of a fresh range of feelings and sensations, and thereby increases his intelligence. (MFAP.22)

A year or two after arriving in Paris, Perlès, as he recalled, had assimilated "the spirit of the new language", had begun writing and even feeling in French. "And soon I felt at home in French, as though I had never spoken another language"(MFAP.22). Brassai called Perlès a linguistic genius. Henry Miller too remarked on this astounding talent (8). By the mid-1920s, then, French rather than German had become became his native tongue, his "literary medium", and soon his "use of it was perfect", so perfect in fact, that "not even Proust could have frowned on it"(MFAP.22).

In Tropic of Capricorn Miller said that he really awoke to life only in Paris, the reason: "I had renounced America, renounced my past" (Capricorn 45). Perlès' casting off his past personae may seem to parallel that of Miller - but only at first sight. There was a profund difference. Miller rejected America, vilified America - but remained 100% American nevertheless. Perlès abandoned his Austrian past, never returned to Vienna, it appears, in the years between the war, and became a Frenchman.

Later still, after coming to England in December 1938, Perlès rapidly became a British patriot, enlisting as a volunteer in His Majesty's Auxilary Military Pioneer Corps, concerned about the future of humanity, glowing with a new seriousness, with moralistic overtones, which his friends greeted with surprise and little enthusiasm (9). Similarly, the friends from the early years in Paris, mostly drifters "from the mangled remains of the Austro-Hungarian empire"(MFAP.13), those whom he listed in My Friend Alfred Perlès, must have wondered at his metamorphosis into a "hundred percent" Frenchman.

Miller's renunciation of America was anything but absolute, more in the nature of an inverted declaration of love, a highly emotive act, at the very least. Again, almost analogously, Perlès first novel from his "English" period The Renegade contains a long reminiscent chapter on Paris, as his earlier French novels and essays included retrospective passages about his Austro-German youth. Unlike Miller, who wrote passionately about his past, who was obsessed with his pre-Paris life in New York, however, the books and thoughts of Perlès have no vital source in this past life. His ruminations were not cold or indifferent either, but they were those of one who had left times past behind.

"A tiny fraction of that race is in me", he wrote in his "On Goethe" letter to Henry Miller: "It has resisted all my conversions. At times, and almost against my free will, this fraction asserts itself, like a neglected plant, unwatered, and which grows in spite of it" (T'ien Hsia.vii.3.282). France had become his new cultural home, but his familiarity with the German was not lost. Miller said to Anais Nin: "He knows Goethe inside out" (LtAN.74). In the latter half of the 1930s he published essays on Rilke and Mozart, Schubert and Hölderlin. These were often excerpts from Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur, where he wrote about his childhood and youth in Austria as well. One of his contributions to the Booster, "Dans les Neiges de la Schmelz", was a boyhood memory, describing how he was "born" at the age of nine. Another excerpt from Sentiments Limitrophes, the Goethe letter, which was largely an attempt to fathom the influence of that great poet on German culture and the German mind, included a warm remembrance of days spent as a child exploring his parents' garden in Hütteldorf near Vienna. "I am German, almost Germanic", he says, dreaming of the past: "The German language has rebecome the most beautiful in the world. I bathe in it as in a limpid water. Its waves chant to me unforgettable melodies - unforgettable because familiar" (T'ien Hsia.vii.3.285). But in spite of this nostalgic reminiscence and others like it (SL.124f), Perlès was more often an observer of his past, than one reliving it. Miller loved and hated, Perlès scrutinised from the vantage point of his respective new identities.

Towards the end of the 1930s, however, two decades in other words after he left Vienna, his estrangement increased even more as he was confronted with that stark paradox of German culture and German barbarism. In 1940, after he had joined the A.M.P.C. he wrote a patriotic letter to Miller, criticising his friend's typically American detachment. "As a human being, I naturally considered Germany my arch-enemy - despite Goethe, Hölderlin and Rilke" (Horizon.ii.12. 292f). He had already reflected on this terrible split in the essay on Hölderlin published in the London magazine Purpose in early 1939: "In the days when Germany reached the highest peak of poetic genius the people were at the lowest level"(Purpose.xi.2.101). He added: "That there is no people so barbarian as the Germans, is Hölderlin's terrible verdict on his compatriots" (ibid.). It was also the verdict of His Majesty's private soldier Alfred Perlès.

Ten years before, when he joined Miller for a drink on the terrace of the Dôme on the carrefour Vavin, Perlès still looked at the world with different eyes. In those Montparnassian years, he was still (his own words) "content with being a peaceful and peaceloving parasite" (Horizon.ii.12.294). What have Perlès' parasitical state and his relation to Austria to do with Miller and their meeting in 1930? It was this: Brassai, a friend of both of them, said that Perlès' German atavism was the most important bond between him and Henry Miller (HMGN.12). This is an interesting point, though difficult to substantiate. It is true, Miller's childhood was spent in almost entirely German surroundings, his neighborhood "more German than even Germany" (Cancer 32), and though he later disparaged the northern, Protestant way of life, so unlike, incidentally, that of the no less German, dishevelled, dilatory and Catholic Danube monarchy, it was an ingrained part of him nevertheless. Richard Osborn, the pitiable Fillmore in Cancer, later remembered discovering that bohemian Miller's "methodical German nature is outraged by my slovenly ways, my absent-mindedness, my headlessness" (HR.30). In My Friend Henry Miller, Perlès himself remarked on Miller's "German atavism"(MFHM.141), and so plainly, the tiny teutonic plant quietly struggling in Perlès was also noticeable, perhaps more dominant even, in Miller. We should not suppress, however, the fact that in his Goethe letter the Austrian

renegade protested that as an American Miller was an outsider to "our German life". He added: "The world of Goethe will never open up to you. It can only be entered without knocking at the gate"(T'ien Hsia.vii.3.289). However one may assess this denial, a root in German culture seems to have been a point of contact, as Brassai said, although in retrospect it appears tangential, or rather so deep as to be wholly buried by other common ground and other perhaps more superficial interests and experiences.

Perlès had stepped into Miller's life long before actually meeting him. As we have noted in the preceding chapter, Miller's wife June travelled to Europe in 1927, leaving him behind, heartbroken. Her companion was Jean Kronski, a surrealist painter and composer of expressionistic poems. Jean Kronski was also Miller's greatest rival in the last days of The Rosy Crucifixion. In Paris these two women quickly immersed themselves in Latin Quarter life, making the acquaintance of artists such as Oskar Kokoschka, Paul Rosenfeld, Augustus John and the above-mentioned Tihanyi. They were courted by Zadkine, chased by Cocteau and Picasso (as June later proudly told Miller) (Martin 141f). It was perhaps inevitable that they should come across Perlès, a Montparnassian luminary by this time, living in a small appartment behind the Dôme. Perlès later described this meeting in his semi-autobiographical The Renegade of 1943, an encounter which he set in the year 1939 but which incongruously radiated all the poseur and egocentric exuberance which was a part of Paris-America of the 1920s: "My name is Arvis Bedlong, she is Jean Kronski, and we are both geniuses. Garcon!" (Ren.159). According to his book, Perlès fell in love with Jean Kronski, according to June Miller, this happened only after she had rebuffed him. Accompanied by the former he travelled to North Africa, leaving Miller's wife angrily stranded in Paris (SL.132f). Perhaps without knowing it, he had freed Miller of his most dangerous rival (10). It was the first of many favours to his later friend.

Miller met Perlès when he first visited Europe with his wife in April 1928. It was not until early 1930, however, that their unusual friendship really began. The American had been in Paris for a month; he was broke, waiting for money from his wife, had no place to go. Perlès helped him, paid for his drinks, let him sleep in his room in

the Hôtel Central in the rue du Maine, gave him some money, bought him a toothbrush and lent him a clean shirt. This was only the beginning. The path of their friendship, however, from that hotel to their apartment in working class Clichy and finally to the fourteenth district where Perlès lived in the Impasse de Rouet just a stone's throw away from the Villa Seurat, both protagonists have described so often that it almost seems unnecessary to reiterate it in detail, to repeat the tales of sexual comradeship and laughter in the Quiet Days in Clichy, the grotesque adventures of Carl in the Irene passages in Tropic of Cancer, the sentimental reminiscences in My Friend Henry Miller, Remember to Remember, the various Reunions, the lively What Are you Going to Do About Alf?, Perlès' Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur. At the heart of these books, celebrations one should say, was the fact that from 1930 on a natural alliance developed between the two outsiders, a relationship which Brassai described as a kind of symbiosis with the purpose of assuring survival and enjoyment.

In a letter to Joseph Delteil, Miller spoke of Perlès as "mon meilleur ami"(Corr.Priv.17). Theirs was, in fact, the friendship in Miller's Paris, one filled with laughter, zest, mutual aid and pranks, a wild sharing of everything from food to bed, from wine and cigarettes to women and work. Most of all this friendship, as Hans Reichel, the German painter, was apt to say, "made fun" (Moore 96). The problems which invariably crop up in such a close and vital friendship, however, are hardly ever mentioned in their reminiscences, and it is only when one turns to contemporary sources, to the diaries of Anais Nin, for instance, or to the Hamlet correspondence between Fraenkel and Miller, or to the letters Perlès wrote upon his removal to England, or to his Sentiments Limitrophes that an idea of the relationship's complexity and its shadowy aspects actually emerges. For if one looks closer one discovers that both Miller and Perlès matured and changed remarkably in that Paris decade of their friendship; they influenced each other, changed and moved apart, a development which actually culminated in last days of Delta, and in the declaration of Perlès: "I denounce my past allegiances"(RT.20). His chief allegiance in the 1930s had of course been with Henry Miller.

"I admit you were my greatest influence in life" said Perlès in 1940, "not so much literarily but humanly." And he added: "You were a kind of hero to me"(Horizon.ii.12.295). More than once Perlès described the impact of Miller's advent on his life, saying: "my whole life went off at a tangent"(MFAP.32). A friendship with a radiant and powerful character, however, usually has two sides to it; one may participate, be enriched and inebriated - but at the acute risk of dwindling to an appendage. As he was Miller's closest friend in Paris, Perlès experienced this ambiguous situation more acutely than anyone else, experienced both the warmth of proximity and the need to wrench himself free. In fact, as George Wickes noted, Perlès was later often dismissed as an imitator and hanger-on (AiP.264f). In later years and at a safer distance Perlès graciously accepted being termed a disciple, humbly calling himself a pupil of Miller. But was he really no more than a disciple? One should mistrust such retrospective simplification - especially if one is dealing with a man like Perlès whose slipperiness was almost proverbial in the Villa Seurat circle. Miller called him "the most elusive fellow I have ever known"(Clichy 21) and even the sharp eyed Michael Fraenkel noted: "I confess I don't know where I stand with him"(Hamlet 36). In Anais Nin's 1932-34 journal, at any rate, and in Sentiments Limitrophes one discovers a friendship between the wild man from Brooklyn and the Austrian voyou which was active, mercurial and very much eye to eye. Perlès' later exaggerated reverence - "I owe him too much"(AO.12)- as well as Miller's recurring emphasis on how hard and often he laughed with his friend Joey - these simply somewhat misrepresent a past reality.

If at seventy five Perlès repeats: "Like some spiritual gynecologist he delivered me from non-existence to existence" (MFAP.32), then one must set against this Miller's debt to him. It was Perlès who not only put Miller back on his feet in 1930, but also communicated to him a day-to-day optimism, that rouguish outlook and pleasurable way of life en marge, which perfectly suited their particular down and out situation in Paris (11). Perlès' experiences on the fringes of Paris society, his resourcefulness, his generosity and lively sense of humour were precisely what Miller needed, at the time. As his biographer Jay Martin pointed out, the boy from Brooklyn quickly absorbed the Austrian's advice about women and wine and hotel rooms

and sponging and living on one's wits. He soaked up Perlès' voyou morale, took up his engaging insistence on the moment, that one should make the best of life at all times and damn tomorrow. He used them in his literary sketches as well:

> Perlès' epicurean sense of life balanced Miller's romanticism, it helped Henry crystallize his literary invention of a character who had Henry's experience but the attitudes of Perlès towards life. (Martin 219)

In his own Miller biography Perlès wrote that they "had developed the same desperado philosophy" (MFHM.14), and the American too remarked that by the time they met both were already veterans of the street (Remember 190), that they had arrived individually, in other words, at the voyou outlook. But it does seem as if Perlès' contribution somehow completed that hedonistic and irresponsible stance, underlying a book like Tropic of Cancer, an outlook suffused with a remarkable buoyancy and ability to laugh, a je m'en fouism which flourished in the tropical demi-monde they moved in. The increasingly deteriorating state of political and economic life in France in these years did not touch them, they said, for they, after all, had been in a state of war with their surroundings for a good part of their adult life. "I know that war goes on all the time and I am on the move" are the words Fraenkel puts into the mouth of Perlès (Hamlet 35), while according to Miller, the former Austrain officer was apt to remark with comical cynicism, that in times of war there was always plenty of money around (Remember 201). "Things are so bad, we say, that it's useless to pretend any more. Get what you can by hook or crook!"(Alf Letter 20). They were, in the words of What Are You Going to do About Alf?, "practical and realistic", their attention concentrated wholly on the present. Miller said: "guys like us are at the bottom", and he added: "We have to eat every day, and smoke, and what not. Five Year Plans don't interest us. Tomorrow doesn't interest us. It's today that counts - and only today!"(Alf Letter 9f). Though Miller actually composed the Alf letter, much of the animus behind it came from Perlès and so it is difficult to understand, in brief, how after having survived on his own wits for more than a decade before meeting Miller, Perlès could later write something like: "He gave me the facts of life" (AO.12). Their friendship was plainly not an asymmetric set-up,

at least not in the early days.

According to almost all of the accessible sources, Miller was the more forceful character - and yet there was a time when talk of a master and disciple relationship would have seemed more than absurd. They were partners, equals in fun and crime and in writing as well. Perlès admired the work of Miller - and vice versa. The American once even declared that he liked what his friend was doing better than anything he himself could do, and he asked Anais Nin: "Am I the better writer, or is he?"(AN.i.174). This was in the early years, the Clichy springtide of their friendship. "Fred has a finesse which I lack, the quality of an Anatole France"(AN.i.187), said Miller in Spring 1932, and Anais Nin who favoured Miller's vulcanic eruptions was nevertheless willing to concede that the pages of Perlès were "delicate as a water color"(AN.i.101).

In the months and years following the Nazi ascent to power, Perlès recalled, there was "a strong influx of German refugees", and "Montparnasse was fast changing"(MFHM.122f); yet not only Montparnasse was rapidly changing. In September 1934 Tropic of Cancer finally appeared. Miller moved into the Villa Seurat studio. What their reminiscences never mention, however, was that Perlès moved in with Miller, only to be shown the door soon after, put out to walk the streets again, as Miller said. Miller wanted to live alone. Perlès was thunderstruck, disillusioned, hurt, more so as he had just lost his job at the Chicago Tribune (HMGN.120f). After drifting, living at half a dozen different addresses, Perlès finally settled in a "rat-hole" in the Impasse de Rouet and harmony was restored (12). They lived almost door to door for the next four years and Miller said that they were together as often as in the Clichy days. One does not wish to read too much into a disagreement between friends, difficult enough to spot at all behind the perhaps rather bland smokescreen of those "wonderful Villa Seurat days", yet one cannot help but register the impression that this ejection of Perlès was symptomatic, that from about 1934 on the character of their friendship changed.

In part this may have been due to Miller's rise in the world of letters, which brought new acquaintances and admirers, new horizons and possibilities, and was accompanied by a new sense of self-importance. Anais Nin summed up: "The Henry I first knew was humble and unsure. The Henry of today is self-assured and slightly megalomaniacal" (AN.ii.273). Matching his growing self-esteem, however, was Miller's immense creativeness, book after book appearing, article after article, including that begging letter for his "starving" friend Alf, published about a year after he decided to eject him from the Villa Seurat. Perlès was unable to keep up, did perhaps not even want to. A letter to Miller from 1940 contained the admission: "I had no great ambitions - not even in literature" (Horizon.ii.12.295). Still, it must have been a sad day for Alfred Perlès, whose books were praised by Joseph Delteil and even by the Nobel Prize winner of 1937, Roger Martin du Gard, when he realised (as he must have) that much of the interest his writing aroused was overshadowed by a formidable interest in his American friend. His novels Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor appeared, sank from view and were only reissued recently; his Miller biographies are still quoted. In part, one must say, his being stigmatised as "Miller's Boswell" (BCGO.315) was his own doing, for from 1940 onward, he tended to ornament and embellish his own writing with his friend Henry Miller. This was the direction: in 1944 Life and Letters today published "Henry Miller in Villa Seurat", an article which was reprinted in The Happy Rock collection and became a chapter in My Friend Henry Miller. Perlès who had "always wanted to become a writer"(MFAP.20) had become an "entertaining, informative, anecdotal, nostalgic" apologist, as the Times Literary Supplement put it (TLS.mmdcccxxvi.247). Soon Perlès, who is in fact "an underestimated writer", and not only in the opinion of Hugo Manning (HM.16), had - as he said himself in 1959 and without irony - "graduated into discipleship"(AO.12). Without sharing Perlès' own intention of emphasising the standing of his controversial friend by humbling himself, "disciple" was the word the TLS used to describe him as well.

Perhaps it was inevitable that into a whirling Miller's wake should be sucked that drifter and chameleon Alfred Perlès, renegade and multi-talent, rootless seeker of roots, linguistic wonder and wanderer. And yet, other friends had weathered the storm, sailed along-

side the Brooklyn steamer, defended him against outside criticism, and then departed enriched: Anais Nin, Fraenkel, Lowenfels, Brassai, Durrell. In Perlès' case there was a complex network of reasons why he should be drawn under, but curiously they all seem to have to do with what we have called protean exile, that is, the propensity to adapt oneself wholly to one's new surroundings. And Perlès adapted himself to his new surroundings, which were, in the second half of his life in Paris, Henry Miller. Miller, "the first human being I encountered to whom I could fully open up", sharer of the first fixed abode in years in the rue Anatole France in Clichy, became his "hero", his world, in a way his "home" as well (Horizon.ii.12.295). If we have said up to now that Perlès was an Austrian before becoming wholly French in the 1920s and then finally wholly British, we must interpolate between the French and the English incarnations his Millerian period.

There were preparatory influences. In all liklihood the American impact did not begin with Miller, nor perhaps even with Miller's great rival Jean Kronski in 1927. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of Montparnasse in the 1920s had a strong American component and Perlès was not left untouched. In 1930 he was already working, we have noted, for the Chicago Tribune as a proofreader and contributor. His articles were in English (Martin 196f). Miller was probably mistaken or exaggerating when he said in his preface to The Renegade: "When I first met him in Paris he scarcely spoke any English. Before I left he was correcting my English"(Ren.6). The important fact is: Perlès was fluent in English before he left for England in 1938, translating excerpts from his own French books into English - American English! Indeed, there is no reason to blame Donald Guittierez for referring to Carl of Tropic of Cancer as "another American working on a newspaper" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.28). Miller's portrait of Carl/Perlès may have been a caricature, but it was essentially not too far off the mark. Anais Nin felt confident enough to say: "He echoes Henry, mimics him" (AN.i.100). Indeed, Perlès at times exaggerated this strong tendency to mimicry, as Brassai remembered, to a point where he completely lost his own identity. There is every reason to assume that, for a time at least, he lost his identity to Henry Miller (HMGN.17f). It is incidentally revealing that he spoke very often, in at least two of his Booster contributions, for instance, not counting poems, of

spiritual rebirth, of new cycles, of initiations into a new life (13).

Though shareholders in "the same desperado philosophy" (MFHM.14), though their books "had some of the same materials - their mutual acquaintances"(Martin 255), Miller and Perlès were fundamentally different types. There was a sense of changeability and transience about the latter wholly absent in Miller, "the Happy Rock". Perlès' adaptations of himself astounded everyone, but however perfect, they remained adaptations. All this would not have mattered had he been what one might call a powerful personality, a fanatic with an inner impulsion to express himself at all costs. Miller later said that, like Michael Fraenkel, Perlès had fervour, glowing inwardly with a white flame (AiP.255). Contemporary sources hardly corroborate this assertion. In Quiet Days in Clichy Miller described his friend as someone who persistently sought to restrain, to control and to economise his experience, his creativeness and emotions, "always endeavouring to hold back instead of giving forth" (Clichy 23). Perlès reduced "his natural flow", as Miller put it, "to a thin trickle"(Clichy 22). His art was no obsession. He was in this the antithesis of Miller, producing exactly two pages of writing a day, no more and usually less, stopping if necessary in mid-sentence (Remember 193f). Writing, he said in his 1940 letter to Miller, was not compulsive; it came easy to him. "I could have gone on for ever knocking out my four pages a day, with nice similes, scintillaing metaphors, colourful flowerpots" (Horizon.ii.12.294). There was no talk of being possessed (AiP.255).

In Remember to Remember Miller wrote with affectionate humour about the two page limit (which was in part at least also due to the fact that Perlès had to work in an office to earn a living), and yet at the time (1932) it was a matter of hard debate. Miller was for, Perlès against, what they called expansion. "Fred criticizes Henry's reading, his efforts to think, attacks his knowledge of science, interest in movies, in theatre, in philosophy, criticism", wrote Anais Nin, who was at that stage still all for expansion: "A big enough artist, I say, can eat anything, must eat anything, and then alchemize it"(AN.i.163). This was early in the day, and Perlès still pugnacious and still prepared to attack his friend. He had actually put his

finger on a genuine problem, a point which not only Orwell and Norman Mailer, but Anais Nin herself later agreed on, namely that Miller ought to have stuck more to his original subject matter, to the streets. Vaunting the virtues of voyou wit and common sense clarity, Perlès walked out of the mighty, yet almost impenetrable Hamlet correspondence in 1935, originally conceived as a thousand page discussion between himself, Fraenkel and Miller. His criticism of the enterprise seems in itself perfectly fair but his motives seem questionable; not only was Perlès' creativeness evidently limited, he also had (understandable) difficulties in following Miller's and Fraenkel's flights. "Fred hates Fraenkel", said Anais Nin: "Fraenkel shows up Fred's fuzzy thinking"(AN.i.110). Fraenkel and Miller took off in a real duet, leaving behind an angry Perlès, who could only heap scorn on his rival's head: "That bastard"(Horizon.i.7.504).

Behind Miller's voracious reading and intellectual gymnastics was the desire to get beyond Tropic of Cancer; behind his expansion the aim to transcend the picaresque experience of the first part of his life in Paris. This implied moving away from easy-going Fred Perlès. "He is asserting himself as a thinker", wrote Anais Nin of Miller, "he is asserting his seriousness. He is tired of being considered a mere 'cunt-painter', an experimentalist, a revolutionary"(AN.i.152). Perlès, on the other hand, shied away from expansion, from grand gestures, change, experiment, at least in the early part of the decade. Indeed, in this light his chronic self-restraint, his literary preference for delicacy and detail and precise miniature, seem to suggest that there was an obverse side to a prolonged voyou life, a deep need for security and perspicuity, a conservative impulse, the desire to hold on to what one has got, to enjoy it carefully. This, however, may be straining the point. Still, there were times around the middle of the decade when Perlès seemed to succumb to acute complacency, an echo of Vienna coffee house Gemütlichkeit perhaps, which deeply angered his friend Henry. "Alf is always looking for a comfortable room in which to write his Quatuor en Ré Majeur", wrote Miller to Fraenkel after evicting him from his studio: "And while Alf is waiting for the proper place in which to park his fanny, Antonin Artaud, in manic-depressive fashion, knocks out his L'Art et La Mort. He knocks it out in a padded cell for which he pays no rent and no taxes" (Hamlet 29).

A real artist to Miller's mind was not only one for expansion, but was also one possessed. Perlès for all the hardship he had experienced, or because of it, was (still) a bon-vivant, for whom writing was "not even an outlet, but merely a means of nurturing my own egocentricity" (Horizon.ii.12.295). For Miller the hedonist touch was most useful as literary subject-matter, and also as a literary pose (vide the Booster editorials); however, at times it bothered him most intensely in real life. Shortly after he had turned out from the Villa Seurat that "Philadelphia capon" Fred Perlès, Miller wrote : "I'm letting him walk the streets for a while so as he'll have a little anguish to toughen him up"(Hamlet 28). A real artist was all for expansion, obsessed with his art, and burning with an intensity which Perlès at this point plainly lacked. "It's like a six-day bicycle race in which your partner sleeps all the time", complained the American: "He won't even come out of his bunk for a sprint" (Hamlet 28). Miller, the false bohemian, as Brassai called him, had settled down, household and home - but this was in order to create like a fury (HMGN.82). Richard Osborn depicted Miller as a typical "Germanic" writer, who worked almost all of the time - even, as a matter of fact, in his Cancerian days of penury (14). By the mid-thirties at any rate, the basis of the comradeship between a (still) libertine Perlès and work-horse Henry Miller had evidently shifted.

Interestingly, as Brassai recalled, conversations in the cafés of the 14th arrondisement, the Zeyer and the Bouquet d'Alesia, just around the corner from Miller's Villa Seurat, were more likely to be about astrology, the occult, about Yoga and Zen than about women, sex and food (HMGN.139). Miller the "cunt-painter" had successfully been dethroned by the mystic Gottlieb Leberecht Müller of Tropic of Capricorn, by Henry Miller the contributor to T.S.Eliot's Criterion, by Miller the prophet and Miller the cosmologist. The seeds of these gradually blossoming personae were manifest even in the early Cancer. Keeping in mind what we have said of Perlès' "Millerian period", we may assume that he followed suit, and indeed it was not long before he too acquired a real taste for the new topics of the Villa Seurat. He did not dissociate himself from this, Miller's movement into seriousness, and Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor evince echoes of the new

tone. Indeed, the spiritual "conversion" which struck him on first of January 1938, and in the following months, allowed his real self to vanquish his false masks and roles, as Miller put it (Remember 204), and it was closely related to the mystical and esoteric atmosphere and interests floating about in the Villa Seurat from 1934 to the end of the decade.

Perlès not only followed the example of Miller and began contributing serious essays and reviews in English to a variety of distinguished literary journals. Just like his friend he too was showing the door to the voyou. With Michael Fraenkel his discussions of the "peregrinatons in Contrapuntal Weather, the Bastard Way, and the Sacred Body"(Hamlet 35) had still been aimed (allegedly) at scrounging a meal. His subsequent talks with David Edgar about esoteric lore and occultism, however, were more in earnest. Miller tended to be the carthorse in this process of diversification, of opening new interests with a new seriousness, but Perlès came to take an active part, and more. He actually carried the movement to a logical conclusion, and was carried in turn out of Miller's orbit. For unlike his American friend whose attraction to cosmological concepts was and remained balanced (mostly) by a more sallow, coarser streak of gallows humour and cynical realism, Perlès subsequently renounced categorically his libertine existence in Paris.

In his new seriousness, he proclaimed in early 1939, there was no room for "threadbare Villa Seurats" and "mangy Delta covers"(RT.52). This change was slow in gathering momentum. Under the influence of Antonia White, his "conversion" had come one night, New Year's Eve 1937/38, and this was (perhaps revealingly) at the very height of the Booster period, a time of dissolution and dada (as Anais Nin felt) which he had participated in with vigour. Perlès told Miller that something had happened that night which would change the course of his life. And it did. In the darkening days of 1939 the life of Perlès was changed. "It almost seemed to me that this war was coming to me personally", he wrote in 1940: "it was the necessary climax to my life, or rather, it atoned for my past life"(Horizon.ii.12.295).

In Remember to Remember Miller discussed this change in Perlès, his enlistment in the British Army, an act which took his friends entirely by surprise. He noted that Perlès had given up the false security and immunity of one living the marginal life (Remember 212). In his own words, Perlès' new life as a soldier meant atonement, taking "the stand of the belligerent" in the war against Hitler and for humanity, as well as giving up his pernicious "private neutrality" (Horizon.ii.12.294). As he makes very clear, his critique of "American" detachment was also a rejection of Henry Miller; the time of hero-worship was over, and a critical scrutiny was about to appear of what had been his and Miller's literary programme in the early 1930s. "We are not creating a proletarian literature out of misery and denial", the Alf Letter had said: "we are creating a literature about ourselves, about our happy life of shame"(Alf Letter 10). Perlès' leave-taking of his "Millerian period" in 1939/1940 included a rejection not only of the asocial life and immoral attitudes of the Clichy period, but also of its literary expression. "If I ever take up writing again", said Perlès in December of 1940, "it will be a marked departure from what I owe to you"(Horizon.ii.12.295).

It was a bitter irony, that in his valediction to "the soft and sensuous corruption of Paris"(Horizon.ii.12.293), to his life with Henry Miller, Perlès should employ Miller's idiom and Miller's "mode of expression"(AO.12). His "literary medium" was now English but, for a time, it remained in part the American variant of English as it was spoken and written by Henry Miller. Escaping from Miller's presence was easier than from his language, and renunciations of the past are hardly ever as complete as all that. In July 1940, for instance, more than a year after bidding farewell to his "past allegiances" in the "Aller Sans Retour London" letter, Perlès contributed a story to Cyril Connolly's Horizon. It was entitled "I Live on my Wits". Whether written before or after his "conversion", this was, in fact, a literary piece of the "Millerian period", orientated on Miller, not only thematically but tonally and stylistically as well. A variation on the topic: "Let us all now fleece and ridicule that miserly monomaniac Boris alias Michael Fraenkel!", it is a funny if cynical story, playing on the eccentric's alleged remoteness from the pleasures of life, his reputed stinginess (though he and Eduardo Sanchez financed

What Are You Going to Do About Alf?), the roguish hero's superior ability to enjoy life, to outwit the intellectual freak and to survive. A retrogression if viewed in the context of his letters about a new life, it was Clichy and the good old bad days of the Villa Seurat all over again. Clearly, the renegade amorality of the 1920s, which the Austrian had banished, reappeared coquettishly in these pages: "As for the gold ingot, he naturally did not keep it in the Villa Borghese. If he had done so I would probably have murdered him"(Horizon.i.7.504).

Perlès was not actually plagiarising Miller's attitudes or themes. After all, it was he who, in the words of George Wickes, "provided Miller with a point of view he could use in his writings, a mixture of cynicism, bravado and buffoonery"(AiP.265). Still, anyone familiar with Tropic of Cancer (admittedly in 1940 there cannot have been many readers of Horizon who were) must have felt that this was little more than a variation. Anyone familiar with Miller's "Max", written around 1936 and considered by some to be the best story he ever wrote , will have sensed the inspirational source, the model of tone, treatment and even nomenclature.

George Wickes said: "As a writer no one could have been further removed from Miller"(AiP.265). Perlès was, in the words of Miller, "a delicate guy, refined, sensitive, a bit faisandé"(Alf Letter 13f), and his writing often partook of these exquisite qualities. He wrote like a "subtle ironist" , George Wickes put it, but one must add, not always. In the early days of his life in England especially, Perlès was not that far removed from Miller. "A Henry Valentine hangover" (Corr.49) Durrell once cheerfully admitted to in a letter to Miller, and Perlès might on occasion have been well advised to follow Durrell's example of marking with a blue pencil all the echoes of their American friend. What is curious, however, is that his essays, reviews, newspaper articles and occasional descriptive passages show that he was thoroughly capable even in those days of not sounding like Miller - even when he was writing in English.

As a whole generation of American writers was to discover, it was difficult to escape the immense vitality radiating from the Brooklyn Boy's prose (at its best). It was difficult even if one was reborn, ran off to England, made new friends, and joined the Pioneer Corps. Dodging the Miller touch had after all been difficult enough while he was still writing in "that exacerbatingly spotless French of his that won't leave the tiniest crumb around anywhere"(Fraenkel) (Hamlet 36). Though Sentiments Limitrophes and Tropic of Cancer may well have been, in Miller's words, "companion books in misery and loneliness" (Martin 255), Perlès himself left little doubt as to who inspired whom. It was Miller who, according to Perlès "made me write my first Sentiments limitrophes, and listen to the Quatuor en Ré-Majeur" (Horizon.ii.12.295).

Still, if Perlès was capable of speaking with his own voice, even in English, but did not use it, if he expressed his desire to emancipate himself and yet continued to echo Miller repeatedly, one must ask, why? We have suggested there were after-effects of the "Millerian period", remnants of his "hero-worship". There may have been more, however, Miller's success. On occasion one cannot help the impression that, just as he (and so many others) later produced reminiscences of his friend Henry Miller, whose fame was ever spreading, so in the early days of his life in England, Perlès used Millerian tones, admittedly mixed with his own detailed experiences of pre-war Paris, in order to play to a gallery of readers not yet acquainted with Miller's suppressed work. "I Live on my Wits" would be a case in point.

His first novel in English, The Renegade was completed around 1941. Only published in 1943, it was a hastily assembled patchwork of items written in England, including parts of the letters to Miller. Significantly, it also included parts written before he left France. Moreover, at least one section was composed before his "conversion" to a new seriousness, and this was published in the Booster in 1937. It was entitled "Limbs Ancient and Modern". Like his description of the encounter with Arvis Bedlong and Jean Kronski, this excerpt was strongly redolent of the Parisian America which had disappeared more than a decade before. Incongruously, however, Perlès combined both sections, including his African trip with Jean Kronski, in two chapters,

both called "Sacrificing to the Elements", transporting these Montparnasse adventures of his hero André Perreau into the year before the war. "Boat trains were unloading hundreds of Americans every day in Montparnasse like another Expeditionary Force"(Ren.187). In 1939!

Like Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor, "Sacrificing to the Elements" comprised descriptions of Parisian street-life, demi-monde night-scenes in bistros and bars, complete with decrepit prostitutes, drunken American girls lying in the gutter, French waiters, the Café Versailles and the Kosmos, bedbugs and making love in second-rate hotels, "lesbians, homos, newspapermen and other perverts" (Ren.190), the usual Select crowd, in other words, the usual Millerian fauna. Even Wambly Bald (who had left Paris in 1934) is mentioned by name, "famous columnist" (Ren.163), better known as the notorious Van Norden from Miller's Cancer. It is true that the Paris parts of the book wholly lack Miller's verve, and reveal rather subtle delicacies of description which were Perlès' forte: "Coloured sunshades, light, warmth. The atmosphere seemed to be impregnated with that typically Parisian perfume cocktail, composed of sunrays, dust, petrol, Guerlain perfumes, alcohol and the smoke of Maryland cigarettes"(Ren.149). Still, in these Paris parts The Renegade strikes one as resembling an expurgated Tropic of Cancer, a book doctored for an English audience, airy descriptions of gay Paree, which did not exclude its more repellant yet undoubtedly enticing aspects - "smell of bedbugs, left-over soup, syphilis, ordure" (B.iii.21f). Overtly sexual scenes were coyly kept in French (Ren.88ff), and, as befitting a book written during the war and by a man ready "to die for England. Any day!"(RT.57), the moral uplift was not missing in the end. The hero, A.P., extricates himself from the Siren's song, from the allurements of the Seine metropolis, goes to England, where the air was heavy, not with Guerlain perfume and the smoke of Maryland cigarettes, but with political discussions about the impending war, and, as Miller noticed, with anthroposophic, mystical lore. "I renounced Paris without denouncing it. Life had a sterner purpose for me"(15). The war breaks out and A.P., the former exile, enlists in the Army: "For deep down I had conquered the futility of my existence, I had emerged on a higher plane of life"(Ren.157).

Notes

1. SL.9; Remember 191; Ren.5.
2. "... j'étais devenu un des plus jeunes sous-lieutenants de l'armée autrichienne, je portais de belles bottines vernies et un sabre biens astiqué, je me faisais photographier en tenue martiale et en tenue de gala, avec képi et casque et sans képi et sans casque, je buvais du thédans les salons et du champagner dans les boîtesde nuit, je déflorais des vierges et me laissais déflorer par des matrones, tout le monde m'admirait et je m'admirais moi-même. J'avais dix-neuf ans, la vie était belle" (QeRM.159).
3. QeRM.174f; Putnam 114.
4. RT.10; MFAP.12; Hamlet 35.
5. CCJM.119; Alf Letter 15ff.
6. MFAP.11,16.
7. Horizon.ii.12.293; Remember 190.
8. HMGN.16f; Ren.6.
9. HMRH.201f. "He's now British, you know, and seems awfully pleased about it. Although he's become a sort of little saint, very steady and sensible and radiant"(Corr.260).
10. In a letter to Miller in 1939 Perlès underlined the importance of his encounter with Jean Kronski (RT.40), who was not, incidentally, as a footnote in David Pryce-Jones' memoir of Cyril Connolly incorrectly states, identical with Jean Bakewell, another one of his Montparnasse acquaintances. Jean Bakewell later became Connolly's first wife. This was a forgivable error, since Jean Bakewell and Jean Kronski were of approximately the same age, both painters, both crypto-lesbian, Jean Bakewell's friend called Mara, which was the name Miller gave his wife in Tropic of Capricorn. However, Miller's Jean and "Mara" had quarrelled and separated sometime in Spring of 1927, whereas Connolly's society girls, from a wealthy East Coast background, were still the best of friends when the Englishman met Mara Andrews more than a year later. Although Miller's wife was evidentally not beyond fabricating fantastic stories about herself, and never publicly acknowledged her marriage to Miller, she was known in Greenwich Village and in Montparnasse by the name of June Mansfield and not Mara Andrews: "Everybody called her June Mansfield", said Waverly Root, "including Wambly Bald, long a crony of Miller's, who wrote in one of his columns in the Paris Edition of the Chicago Tribune, dated July 25, 1933, about 'June Mansfield, the girl with the golden face'"(WRPHM.7W). And as far as 'golden faces' were concerned, it seems that whereas Miller's wife was attractive with a very feminine appearance, Mara Andrews, "platonically in love with an Austrian called Fredl", as Connolly remarked, was not what one would call beautiful, always wearing boy's clothes (CCJM.118, 211); and whereas Connolly's Jean was pretty with "a good figure"(CCMJ.202), Jean Kronski "was built like a football player"(WRPHM.7W). Finally, as Connolly noted in The Unquiet Grave, Mara Andrews committed suicide in the early 1940s, whereas Miller saw June again as late as 1961 (CCUG.69f; Martin 458f).
11. Martin 219; Alf Letter 13.

12. HMGN.120f; MFHM.133; Remember 196.
13. RT.9f; B.i.44; B.iv.18f.
14. HR.28ff; AiP.248.
15. Ren.197; Remember 145.

III. Anais Nin and Henry Miller : "Nomade de luxe" and Surplus Man.

Alfred Perlès, prime companion in Miller's "happy life of shame" (Alf Letter 10), was also that era's most entertaining raconteur, "entertaining, informative, anecdotal, nostalgic"(TLS.mmdcccxxvi.247) as the TLS reviewer of My Friend, Henry Miller noted in 1956 (the memoir which was later followed by My Friend , Lawrence Durrell, and in 1973 by My Friend, Alfred Perlès). "Is it really non-fiction?" (MFHM.ix) Henry Miller asked himself in the preface of the first volume, a question germane not only to Perlès' friendly trilogy, which on closer inspection reveals itself as humorous hagiography rather than history, but, of course, also to Miller's own Clichy days recollections, to the sentimental remembrances in Remember to Remember and his other war and post-war writings. Time came to distort significantly the memories of the Paris years of hardship and happiness and so one must look elsewhere for a truer reflection of the period, to contemporary sources whose interpretation of events was usually more spontaneous, diverse and confusing. Miller's Hamlet correspondence with Michael Fraenkel has been mentioned, his exchange with Lawrence Durrell, some of his epistles to Count Keyserling, and the letters which he wrote to his friend Emil Schnellock: "Letters of two pages, twenty, forty - evoking every phase of his life in Paris" (HR.16), letters from which Jay Martin and George Wickes have occasionally quoted although they are as yet unpublished. Until they are published, however, Anais Nin's well-known journals offer perhaps the most detailed insight into the Parisian world of the Miller and friends, a panoramic sweep across this most fruitful decade. Although the published version is radically abridged, suppressing, as her recently published intimate journal Henry and June has shown, important information, although it was reworked and carefully edited, although it was written in a state of awareness on the borderline between personal autobiography and extrovert art, these public privacies, irritating and self-congratulatory, are perhaps the real chronicles of Clichy and Villa Seurat. They describe - aside from anything else - a friendship and a love which became central to the life and art of Henry Miller.

Miller's friends tended to claim for themselves a crucial, even decisive role in his development as a writer. He did not begrudge them it. Still, Miller might well have arrived at his "death philosophy", might have begun to write as he lived and talked without the advice of Michael Fraenkel. He might have found his own "modern" voice without his talks with Walter Lowenfels, though the latter claimed "to have initiated him to modern writing"(AN.i.117). He might have survived the days of penury without the generous help of Richard Osborn. He might even have learned to live on his wits without his teacher and factotum Perlès. He was in the debt of his friends, no doubt - and reciprocated by immortalising them in the merciless caricatures in Cancer and elsewhere. In his Paris years he never caricatured Anais Nin.

Perhaps it is wrong to approach Anais Nin by way of Henry Miller. Even in the 1930s she was an emerging artist in her own right, friend and interlocutor of other thinkers and artists, men like Antonin Artaud, Stuart Gilbert and Otto Rank. However, from the point of view of our subject matter, the Villa Seurat circle and the Booster, it is the relationship between Anais Nin and Miller which was relevant. Significantly, her bibliographer Benjamin Franklin V, referring to the Villa Seurat writers and artists, once spoke of "the Nin-Miller group" (DLB.300). Indeed, Anais Nin noted in the summer of 1935: "I am the young mother of the group"(AN.ii.51).

According to her published diaries in the course of the decade Anais Nin defined herself chiefly in relation to three men, if one discounts the important figure of her father and that of her husband who has only appeared on the scene in the frank Henry and June. They were Henry Miller, especially in the first part of the decade, Otto Rank in the middle years, and Gonzalo More in the later part. At the risk of distorting the actual complexity of relations and influences, we venture to agree with Benjamin Franklin: "Henry Miller was her most intimate friend during that decade in Paris" (DLB.300). In what follows some aspects of this central 'friendship' will be discussed.

Almost from the moment they first met in autumn 1931, Anais Nin assumed a crucial role in Miller's life. The Letters to Anais Nin, which Brassai compared to the correspondence between Harriet Weaver and Joyce (HMGN.62) are eloquent not merely of their lively exchange, but also of the depth of his admiration, his love, his desire to share ideas and discoveries and experiences with the dark-eyed girl-woman from Louceviennes. It is impossible to summarise, to give even a hint of these epistles' profuse exaltation, which belie the suspicion that Anais Nin's self-admiring diary entries are simply gross exaggeration. Indeed, Miller calculated that in the first two years they exchanged over 900 letters(DLB.286). "Better than any other source, his letters to her record the everyday facts about the most creative period of his life"(AiP.266).

Much has been written about the debt he owed her, so much that one tends to forget the relation was reciprocal. Perhaps this was a result of his earlier literary fame, the unchallenged self-praise in her journals, the fact that her letters to him were not published, that an enthusiastic celebration of friends (such as in "Un Etre Etoilique") was more part of his literary character than of hers. At any rate, if Anais Nin helped him with his work, he reciprocated generously with praise and practical assistance, criticism and encouragement. At times what he wrote went astray: "He read me the thirty pages he wrote on my diary. They are magnificent, but not about the diary" (AN.ii.173). Frequently, however, his criticism was sensitive and to the point: "Once again Henry roused my fighting spirit and my strength. Forced me to write a bigger book"(AN.i.325). His assistance was inestimable.

She in turn helped him with all his Parisian books, especially with Tropic of Cancer, editing and proofreading, criticising. She composed with him a spirited (and secretly ribald) introduction, when the preface Lowenfels produced was found inadequate (1). She helped him to organise his work and material. She stimulated him; her own prose-poem House of Incest, for instance, directly inspired his surrealistic Scenario (AN.ii.245). She frequently showed him her critical diary entries. Moreover, although to say that Anais Nin was "thoroughly at home with the language and culture"(AiP.267) is to exaggerate her knowledge of France - she was still taking lessons in French twice a

Anais Nin

week in 1937 - it is probably correct that with her Miller "deepened his understanding of French literature"(2). She was, in short, his advisor, his propagator, his audience - and never failed to point this out to her diary. She travelled to London in 1934 with his fragments on D.H.Lawrence and Black Spring. Dedicated to her, the latter was the subject of Anais Nin's one and only boost in the Tri-lingual Womb Booster of 1937.

For a long time there was some speculation as to the precise nature of their relationship. Her abridged diaries were of little help here. Waverly Root who found that "neither of them even looked capable of a full-blooded emotion" felt that it was no more than a literary affair between two "prophets of the imaginary"(WRHMAN.7W). She was Miller's "close friend" rather than "patroness" or "mistress"(Labrys.v.61), said David Gascoyne. But as Henry and June shows, Root could not have been more mistaken and Gascoyne only entered the scene in 1937. For in the early part of the decade Miller was Anais Nin's lover. As the unexpurgated account of her love affair first with Miller's wife and then with Miller himself reveals, in the years 1931 and 1932 their liason was anything but a purely platonic literary friendship, but a highly passionate and most physical affair.

In its sexual explicitness Henry and June does contain some surprises (for instance, that Anais Nin's husband fell violently in love with René Allendy, her psychoanalyst); for someone interested in the Villa Seurat story, however, there had been signs enough all along as to the love affair of Miller and the girl-woman from Louceviennes. Perlès, who also fell in love with Anais Nin about the same time as Miller did, had portrayed her extensively in Sentiments Limitrophes. The name he gave to her was Pieta, and Pieta was Henry's lover. "Pieta et Henry sont sûrement au lit"(SL.70). There are a number of such passages in the book(SL.74). Later, Perlès also discussed some of the more intimate features of the Miller-Nin affair in My Friend, Henry Miller, where the private Anais Nin again figures under a pseudonym, Liane de Champsaur. In point of fact, in 1955 an angry Anais Nin forced him to change her name when she read the proofs of this memoir. She did not want her relationship with Miller made public (Martin 459). His biographer Jay Martin has described their romance (minus the sexual

component):

'Come and be my husband for a few days,' she would write from Loceviennes whenever Hugo remained away on business. Alone together, they were often quiet, eating in the garden under the ancient trees, washing the dishes or mending the furnace, savoring the best wines that the Louceviennes merchants could provide, wal-king the dogs across the gravel paths at night, dancing to the music of the victrola, reading and talking. (Martin 267)

Perhaps it is enough to say that in 1933 Miller "wanted nothing more than to marry Anais"(Martin 300). Fairly soon, however, by the middle of the decade at the latest, this 'romantic' component had dwindled markedly and their relationship began to concentrate more on intellectual or literary concerns, or those of publishing (AN.ii.206). Still, in spite of the veil spread over this part of the past its importance should not be underestimated.

Aside from all critical stimulation and personal encouragement - "In life I created his faith"(AN.ii.253) - Anais Nin expressed her belief in Miller in very material terms as well and this was significant for someone as chronically impoverished as Miller. Drawing generously on the resources of her husband and family, she put up the high sum of $ 600 needed to pay for the publishing of Tropic of Cancer in May 1934. She gave him the money to escape from his wife to England in December 1932. She made him gifts (a lamp, a bicycle, a grammophone, books etc), helped to fit out the Clichy apartment, which was this vagabond's first real home, cooked for him (which was also very important), provided the wines from the Louceviennes cellars. She was one of the bourgeois donors who financed the final and most comfortable stretch of his bohemian circuit. She kept and domesticated him. He gratefully acknowledged his debt: "You have been the teacher - not Rank, nor even Nietzsche, nor Spengler" Miller wrote to her on March 7th 1933, calling her: "the living example, the guide who conducted me through the labyrinth of self to unravel the riddle of myself, to come to the mysteries"(LtAN.113). The mysteries included a luxurious and well-lit studio apartment in an elegant and expensive cul de sac in the art deco style of the previous decade south of Montparnasse, for it was Anais Nin who put up the monthly rent for the Villa Seurat 18, the princely sum of 40 dollars.

Lawrence Durrell once said that the "vague sense of exile" never quite left him (Alyn 24). Looking back on her life Anais Nin might have said the same. She was an expatriate, but she was an expatriate with a difference. She was not one of the ambulant writers of the Lost Generation, nor a permanent exile like Eliot or Pound. "Of all the American expatriates in Paris between 1920 and 1940, Anais Nin was one of the few repatriates"(DLB.299). She was born France, in Neuilly near Paris in 1903, grew up in New York and returned to France in 1924. She was a repatriate, but she was also a repatriate with a difference. Quite aside from the fact that she too left France for America when the war began in 1939, her coming to France was a repatriation in the word's very literal meaning. She had returned in 1924 to the land of her father, and, as her diaries of the period make clear, her "true God was her father"(WoA.64).

She came from a Spanish Catholic background, from a curious mixture of restriction and refinement, of Latin narrowness and that cosmopolitan spirit so particular to the belle époque which went into decline with the Great War. "We only saw talented people, people of quality, musicians, writers, professors"(AN.i.109) she recalled and contrasted her "growth in an atmosphere of music and books and artists"(AN.i.63) with Miller's Dostoievskian life in the "lower depths, the underworlds. Violence, ruthlessness, gold-digging, debauch"(AN.i.63). About these early years she wrote in Winter of Artifice and in her diary.

Her mother, Rosa Culmell, daughter of a Danish diplomat and a French woman from New Orleans, met Joacquin Nin in Cuba, a Spaniard, a young piano teacher, composer and gifted musician, who was soon to be celebrated in Europe's capitals. They married and went to Paris. With his family (Anais Nin had two brothers) Joacquin Nin, an incorrigible philanderer, toured the Continent, drifting in the rootless world of the concert pianist whose home was the hotel. He abandoned his family when Anais Nin was nine. After a time in Barcelona (AN.i.210) her mother decided to settle in New York, where the family lived in "poverty". Highly sensitive and precocious, Anais Nin suffered not only from the uprooting from Spain, the life in "an alien land" (AN.i.211) but especially from the separation from her beloved father.

This was the traumatic experience of her life, far more momentous, it seems, than Durrell's early separation from his mother, his being sent away from India to England, his subsequent feeling of exile and alienation, and his turning to art. Her letters to her father were the beginning of the diary, a monologue which continued for decades and in the 1930s also took the shape of the Winter of Artifice story. The diary became a "refuge" for the young girl, an "island" (AN.i.211), a place of dream far from a harsh reality. She grew up a stranger in a new world, exiled from Europe, from her father. "She felt crippled, lost, transplanted, rebellious"(WoA.61).

Still, she enjoyed a certain freedom in spite of all difficulties. Her mother (as the diary says) "encouraged my intellectual pursuits" (AN.i.254), allowed her to leave school at fifteen, to develop outside a conventional education. The often-quoted example is how she began reading her way through a local branch of the New York Public Library alphabetically (AN.i.104). From the age of sixteen she also worked with artists, "becoming the star model of the Model's Club, a subject for magazine covers, paintings, miniatures, statues, drawings, water colors"(AN.ii.57). She was also a dancer, experiencing a first taste of "la vie d'artiste". In 1923 she met on a train to Long Island Hugh Guiler, a young Columbia graduate. They married. In later years he changed his name and his occupation and became Ian Hugo, a fairly well-known avant-garde film-director, another much vaunted beneficiary of her attention and encouragement. Before that metamorphosis, however, Hugh Guiler worked his way as a banker, and in 1924 he was made vice-president of the National City Bank in Paris. After an absence of ten years Anais Nin returned to Europe. This period is described in Journal of a Wife, her diaries covering the years 1923-1927. Another decade passed before she saw her father again.

"Paris was the most important city to Anais Nin"(DLB.303). It was the most important city - but became so only some years after she had returned. In the beginning, as her Journal of a Wife shows, her life was anything but fulfilling; on the contrary, it was frustrating, full of disillusionment, "empty and difficult"(AN.i.347). The first diary she actually published revealingly begins only in the autumn months of 1931, when her Parisian life proper commenced, ironically outside

Paris, in Louceviennes, the sleepy village overlooking the metropolis where she lived with her mother and husband. It began in an old villa to which she had just moved when she met Henry Miller.

As that antipathetic critic Waverly Root noted in his "Montparnasse Memories": "Anais Nin, in her pre-Miller days, struck me as mousy. She did not emerge from the background" (3). In fact, it was only shortly before, in 1930, that she had emerged from literary anonymity by publishing a tribute to "D.H.Lawrence, Mystic of Sex" in the October number of the Canadian Forum of Toronto. Richard Osborn (working in the National City Bank) drew the attention of his friend Henry Miller to this short article. Miller found it exciting "to think of a young woman writing in praise of Lady Chatterley's Lover, a book still banned for sale outside France" (Martin 239). In turn, Anais Nin, who felt liberated into a new world by Lawrence, wanted to meet the author of the ecstatic New Review article on Buñuel. Miller reminded her of her idol Lawrence. "Only a short article," she wrote: "but the words are slung like hatchets, explode with hatred, and it was like hearing wild drums in the midst of the Tuilleries gardens"(AN.i.13)

In later years Anais Nin came to emphasise the essential differences between herself and Miller. She wrote to Lawrence Durrell in 1957:"As you well know, with Henry it was the contraries, not parallelism of any kind" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.51). In an interview in 1974 she remarked: "You see, the friendship with Miller was based on opposites. You know we were as opposite as we could be". She even went on to say: "It wasn't what I call friendship"(TCL.xx.4.288). Indeed, when Miller, the unknown tramp and self-conscious voyou, walked into the old house at 2 bis, rue de Monbuisson, one autumn evening in 1931, his "Mademoiselle Claude" having just appeared in Putnam's New Review, the young banker's wife, so elegant and refined, so delicately neurotic and in a frail way beautiful, seemed in many ways his very opposite - and she was. She later pointed out that this oppositeness "was our interest for each other ... the challenge"(ibid.)- but of course her retrospective descriptions were no less simplifying, no less partial and obfuscating than those of Miller and Perlès. A relationship which was a passionately intense as theirs, and which flowered on for so many years after the romantic excitement had abated cannot be explained

away merely by indicating the innate attraction of opposites. Her journals, as she herself had always insisted, were much "closer to the truth", eloquent of the "changes, paradoxes, contradictions, growth" wherein "lies the truth"(AN.ii.202) - and these journals including Henry and June clearly evince that things were far more complex.

Before going on to discuss some of the more outstanding sides of this central relationship one must point out two things. First, Anais Nin's admiration for Miller's writing, for its strength and fire hardly wavered throughout the first decade of their acquaintance. In spite of all the reservations and criticisms expressed in numerous discussions and in the pages of her journal, she remained a faithful admirer."I enjoy the power of his writing, the ugly, destructive, fearless cathartic strength"(AN.i.17) she wrote shortly after their first meeting, and this view never significantly changed. In the summer of 1938 she noted: "My only pleasure this month was Henry's writing in Capricorn. Extremes of sensuality and lyricism, spirituality and the demon" (AN.ii.307). In moments of estrangement this admiration often proved an invaluable bridge.

The second point was expressed by Anais Nin herself in October 1938: "Henry and I are travelling inversely. I am entering a world of action and violence which Henry abandoned long ago"(AN.ii.313). A reader of the diary will inevitably notice how in the course of the decade Anais Nin moved slowly away (as she always underlined) from the restricted and frustrating isolation of a bourgeois existence, from the introversion of her diary, the walled privacy of her poetic world, into that freer and more public realm of art, politics and psychology, which Paris had to offer to the interested contemporary. At the same time, Henry Miller (who actually initiated her "awakening") left behind the immediacy, the brutal actuality of a life in the streets, a down and out existence in shabby haunts and cheap hotel rooms, retreating - as his subsistence seemed guaranteed - more and more into a world of ideas, the realm of literature and publishing, a secluded, ordered life, in clean and orderly surroundings (whatever gave J.D.Brown the idea that the Villa Seurat studio was "rundown"(DLB.289)?) until, in the Booster years, it is difficult to discern behind the quietistic 'sage' of the Villa Seurat the street boy from Brooklyn, behind the

respected "editor, agent, mentor, and businessman"(DLB.289), the "gangster author" of Cancer and "Mademoiselle Claude" (AN.i.117). When George Wickes said that Anais Nin "never escaped from her introspection" whereas Henry Miller "made the best of both worlds in his writing, allowing his imagination to rampage, yet remaining firmly anchored in reality"(AiP.268) this seems directly to contradict to what has been said above - unless one doubly emphasises the words "in his writing"! We will return to this crucial change later.

There are different kinds of differences between individuals: on the one hand there are dissimilarities which make an exchange between two people difficult and lead them away from each other; on the other hand, there are those which are complementary and lead two individuals together. Why this is so, and why the attraction to a polar opposite can easily change back into intense repulsion, is difficult to say. The love between Miller and Anais Nin, at any rate, drew much of its initial impetus from a complementary oppositeness, while later on in the decade the same differences tended to lead to estrangement. In late 1934 one finds the following entry in her diary: "Rank saying that Henry had learned stability from me, and I mobility from him, that friends often exchanged values. It is Henry who talks about a life of dignity, responsibility, etc."(AN.i.362). Three years later the rate of exchange between them had dwindled: "The differences of attitudes between Henry and myself are becoming more marked." (AN.ii.251). The differences were becoming more marked as their power to attract each other waned.

By that time, however, their complementary oppositeness had perhaps served its crucial propulsive purpose. "Henry represents violence, and chaos, which I could not express, and I represent a Henry he could not express, a tender Henry"(AN.ii.172). Concealed behind this statement was nothing less than a mutual exchange of worlds - of kinetic energy, as it were. Henry Miller released Anais Nin from a bounded orbit, while she in turn gave to his wastefully abundant impulses direction, calm and purpose. Moreover, as Gunther Stuhlman remarked in his preface to Letters to Anais Nin, Miller may have sensed that he had found in Anais Nin the crucial "embodiment" of his myth of European civilisation, a conveniently hybrid "embodiment", to be sure, for there was

much of 'America' in Anais Nin! In turn he personified for her "the promise of those positive traits of 'America'", in other words, "energy, enthusiasm, the somewhat naive but refreshing Gargantuan hunger to absorb, ingest, the entire universe of culture"(LtAN.17).

Among many other things - we cannot begin, for instance, to discuss his role in her neurotic difficulties about the father figure nor their lively sexual relationship - Miller revealed, actually demonstrated to Anais Nin, an attitude of mind and perception which she had never experienced before. He introduced her to a bursting world of dirt, obscenity and poverty, of disorder, adolescent anger and dissolution, to his dramatic Dostoievskian past in New York, hurried her light-years away from her "soft and gentle home"(AN.i.57), her civilised upbringing, showed her, actually took her to, the Parisian low-life which unfolds so magnificently in Brassai's famous photographs. It is important to see that in the early years in Paris, in the 1920s, Anais Nin had felt very much repelled by Paris. Her brother remarked:

> The realities of life in Paris became, for Anais, a nightmare. It wasn't so much the sensuality of the city which shocked her ... but rather the open sexuality of everyday life. French books and publications, French plays and movies, public experiences and social events all contributed to her feeling of not belonging, of looking from the outside in. She hated salacious talk, and the puritanical concept of life, largely the result of her readings or misreadings of Thoreau, Carlyle, Emerson and other idealists, hardly prepared her for the concept that there is no life of the spirit without the sense. (ANJW.xiv)

It is true that very soon she sensed, as Joaquin Nin-Culmell said, the "eternal Spring of Paris"(ANJW.xiv), and stopped writing "long tirades against Paris"(ibid.). But no one, it seems, had actually taken her, shown her the city in the way that Miller did. Henry Miller taught her to look at the city she had been living in for so long:

> I had never looked at a street as Henry does: every doorway, every lamp, every window, every courtyard, every shop, every object in the shop, every café, every hidden-away bookshop, hidden-away antique shop, every news-vendor, every lottery-ticket vendor, every blind man, every beggar, every clock, every church, every whore house, every wineshop, every shop where they sell erotica and transparent underwear, the circus, the night-club singers, the strip tease, the girlie

shows, the penny movies in the arcade, the bal musettes, the artists balls, the apache quarters, the flea market, the gypsy carts, the markets early in the morning. (AN.i.121)

Anais Nin supported him, and he offered in return Paris itself, indeed a Gargantuan Paris, which came to provide the formative backdrop not only to her diary, but to her whole development as a writer. Her Parisian stories, portraits and précis collected in Under a Glass Bell are unthinkable without Miller's Paris. "Had she not experienced Paris in the thirties, she would not have had the same thoughts on literature or have produced so valuable and unique a literary canon as she did"(DLB.303). Miller opened the door to Paris, and she was sure this was the 'real' world, certainly more real than her own shadowy and perfumed existence behind century old walls. Miller provided a new setting and atmosphere, the characters in the most colourful drama in her life. He even introduced her to Gonzalo More, the man who came to stand for 'life' and 'action' long after he himself had retired into the world of art and letters! By teaching her to look, he helped her to realise her literary ideas as well. To the end of the decade Miller was her "chief literary mentor". More important than his literary advice, however, was the way he taught her "to accept life" (AN.ii.149).

Miller in turn was weary of the street, clearly tired of cheap hotels and years of vagrancy, of the hard life which had robbed him of all illusion, tired also of playing the expatriate bum. When Anais Nin showed him a world of culture, refinement and style, of leather-bound books, sparkling glasses and enchanted gardens, a home, he was deeply awed. "It gave me such a splendid feeling of peace and security when I stepped into your home. Here people are really living, was what I thought"(LtAN.32). Brassai once called him a "false bohemian" (HMGN.82). Indeed, peace and security, detachment and nurturing attention were what he needed, in order to complete his book, and this is what a bored and dreaming Anais Nin, mother and muse, abounded in.

It was not before long that the osmosis was in full progress and by early 1934 Anais Nin felt that it was she who had become the extrovert, the explorer, that it was she who represented "life" while

Miller lived now only in order to write his life, to sort out his "world of ideas". She relished describing this change, how he had to be made to "taste meals, walk, relax, go to movies, sit in cafés" (AN.i.325). They had set out on their inverted journeys, and in the examples which follow we will try to point out some of the events and changes along the way, an itinerary not devoid at times of some remarkable ironies.

In early 1933, Anais Nin expressed in her diary a profound hope: "Talking with Henry, I experience the sensation that there will come a time when we will both understand everything, because our masculine and feminine minds are trying to meet, not to fight each other"(AN.i.192). If one ignores the immoderate naivete of this statement, one may say that Anais Nin still believed the man-woman polarity to be complementary and fruitful. She and Miller would perhaps realise its immense possibilities! The idea as such is old and poetically inspiring (vide the yin-yang principle referred to in the Lao-Tzu quotation on the back of the final Booster) and for Anais Nin it seemed for a time on the verge of becoming a reality. Her expectations, however, were not fulfilled; on the contrary, her diary became increasingly a chronicle of what she saw as woman's role in art and "creation" (4). The idea of a broad harmony between the sexes disappeared into the background, as she saw herself engaged in a "struggle against the scientific intellectual inventions of man" (AN.ii.203). Naturally, she ignored the fact that she herself had studied as intensively as anyone in the Villa Seurat circle many of those "scientific intellectual inventions". These male concoctions, she came to feel, were active in "art" as well. Thus her definition of "man", as a creature hopelessly lost, separate, isolated in "objectivity" by "his proud consciousness" (AN.ii.234), detached from a the world of human emotion, did not exclude in any way the male artist, did not exclude Henry Miller; on the contrary, his occasional megalomania, silly autotheism and 'philosphical' quixoteries seem to have been more or less responsible for her increasingly sceptical view of 'man'.

It is a bitter irony that it was he himself, who (along with D.H.Lawrence) awakened Anais Nin by way of example to "the feminine way of perception"(AN.ii.45). He revealed to her the instictive, intuitive and non-rational attitude. However, this mode of experiencing reality had quickly become for him a major subject of discourse, a touchstone in the 'philosophical' synthesis he was trying to achieve from early 1933 onward. In those months, as we have seen, he began turning his back on "his Bohemian life", undergoing that "great transition from romantic interest in life to classical interest in ideas" (AN.i.198). But Anais Nin soon discovered what many other of Miller's later critics and admirers tended to agree on: that "he should be writing only about his life, not ideas" (AN.i.197).

We have here a second irony, for it was under her aegis that Miller began to think of himself as a "philosopher" (5). She encouraged him in his efforts to assert himself "as a thinker"(AN.i.152). She supported his striving to give his work some underlying "idea". When Alfred Perlès advised caution, she defended Miller by saying that a real artist "can eat anything, must eat everything and then alchemize it". And she cowed Perlès with the remark: "Only the feeble writer is afraid of expansion"(AN.i.163). Miller did not fear a big meal, and neither did Anais Nin - at first. Indeed, she herself had learned from Miller how "to expand"(AN.i.57). She had benefited from his vision which seemed boundlessly voracious: "His letters and the notes on the back of them, his wealth of activity, give me a feeling of warmth and fervor which I love, a feeling of expansion, of ampleness, plenitude" (AN.i.57). With this feeling she succeeded in filling up "an empty world"(AN.i.57) and in escaping to Paris.

By February 1934, however, she had changed her mind. The theorising itself, she now noted, was not the real problem, after all she had written extensively about psychoanalysis and the artist and D.H.Lawrence. It was all a matter of scale, of proportion. The "artist has to include the critic"(AN.ii.25) she told him, the artist and the thinker. Miller, she began to fear, was losing himself in "the vast deserts, universe, cosmologies"(AN.i.166) - losing himself in order to escape, as self-centred Anais Nin suspected, beyond her judgement (AN.i.334). This assumption may have later led to her more general

suspicion: "I believe at times that man created art out of fear of exploring woman"(AN.ii.235). At any rate, she began to doubt his digestive capacities, his ability to bring order to his amassed notes, his mountains of material (for example on D.H.Lawrence). Though she helped him she also said: "He drowns in gigantism"(AN.i.311).

As time passed, her wariness of the fruitless dispersion of energies, of his tendency to "grandiloquence and gigantism", to "enormity and massive constructions"(AN.ii.334), her distaste for his unsteady wasteful thinking, grew and led directly to what became her chief objection to his work (and men's "art" in general) in the latter half of the decade: "Henry is not reaching for depth but for quantity. This dehumanizes experience. It is an enlarged world, but empty of feeling, humanity, drama. It leads nowhere."(AN.ii.258). There was no "consciousness of the other"(AN.ii.260), only a cold impersonality and as she put it: "the loss of self"(6). These were moments of greatest estrangement.

From the very first a self-conscious Anais Nin had been aware of a gulf which separated her from Miller. Still, in later years, she appears to have forgotten that for a long time there had existed bridges across that abyss. Gunther Stuhlman said: "there were deeper affinities"(LtAN.17). Whether, however, these were really deeper than what he called "the surface disparities" seems doubtful.

They did have much in common though. In spite of their very dissimilar background, for instance, both had grown up in New York, both were more or less autodidacts (like Durrell and Gascoyne), both had eventually come to France, to the 'Promised Land', and both had to have their eyes opened to it. In the important early years, there was their love-affair. Their complicated relationship with Miller's wife brought them even closer together, for June Miller was the subject of inexhaustible discussion, and of their writing as well, figuring prominently in the pages of the diary, and in Anais Nin's quasi-surrealistic House of Incest. Apart from June, Miller and Anais Nin had numerous common acquaintances and friends, some of them very important to both: Lawrence Durrell and Moricand were the most eminent. As with June, their friends tended to become characters in their writing. "We all write about the same people", she noted, adding

"but so differently"(AN.ii.44). Hans Reichel is a good example. More important, however, they wrote with great attention and interest about themselves.

They shared certain premises about art and the artist, assumptions and topics wich may be situated in the broad stream of twentieth century romanticism: the focus on symbol and dream, "nostalgia for wholeness" (AN.ii.237), the emphasis on self-exploration and autobiography, an intense dissatisfaction with conventional literature, the belief that the artist was an exalted kind of man, that the intuitive grasp of reality was superior to the intellectual, the assurance that these views were being corroborated by psychological and other scientific discoveries. Certain similarities in method and style were inevitable.

Still, in spite of certain similar preoccupations and interests, Miller's work and the writing of Anais Nin differed. They were aware of this. From 1934 onwards disagreements in outlook pushed into the foreground of the diary, reaching from views on obscenity - Anais Nin objected to Miller's "explicitness"(AN.i.316) - from the fact that she lacked all interest in slang (AN.ii.216) to her increasing dislike of Alfred Perlès and his appeal to Miller's burlesque turn of mind. "Am I simply taking a different route from Henry" she asked when Miller did not share her admiration for Pierre Jean Jouve (AN.ii.296). She was in fact taking another route and this also (we might have in mind Perlès' attempts to emancipate himself from Miller) in order to free herself from his influence. Her struggling involvement in the Spanish Republican cause was only one outer indication(7). We have mentioned her feelings about Miller's lack of humanity and compassion, her insistence - perhaps also a secret revenge, an emancipation from his earlier dominance in 'life' - that he was "tainted with intellectualism" (AN.i.312) and far removed from the world of actuality. Always "in need of man the leader" (WoA.81), she tended in the end to react strongly against him. Miller was no exception. Her distaste for his tendency to expand, to "gigantism" was just one part of the case she constructed against him in the later part of the decade. As she realised soberly, without regret, in the autumn of 1937, the differences between Miller and herself were "becoming more marked" (AN.ii.251) and were pulling them apart.

It is important to see that Miller's and Anais Nin's respective artistic developments evince the same inverse trajectory that characterises their views and experiences of reality throughout the decade. While Anais Nin moved from intense introversion to an attitude, which though still psychological, took into account the outside world, Miller's "quest for naturalism"(AN.i.23), his earlier hatred of illusion and artifice, gave way to an aesthetically motivated, imaginative vision, which converged increasingly on mystical realms and on the past.

Anais Nin's major oeuvre was her diary. Her artistic sense developed in relation to it. It was, in fact, a direct result of two decades of intensive diary-keeping. In the 1931-1939 volumes of the journal her ideas on art were still uncertain, weaving, prone to change, especially as the diary, their mainspring, was often severely criticised by those who had a formative influence on her intellectual development. Her father considered it his only rival (Mosaic.xi.H.2.42). Rank and Allendy tended to regard the journal as a neurotic symptom and urged her to move outwards, to write novels and stories instead. Miller's attitude was ambiguous; at times he fulminated against it, at times he applauded her "Whale" in the highest terms (LtAN.180). Still, in a passage from a letter to Durrell written shortly before the Booster jaunt, Anais Nin speaks of the diary as "a problem unsolved, the only one Henry and I differ on - continuously"(8).

She herself thought of the diary not as a work of art, but rather as art's direct antithesis (AN.ii.162); in the beginning she more or less accepted the idea current among her friends that art was healthy and curative, whereas introverted and subjective self-communings (like diary-keeping) were morbid and unhealthy. She even tried giving up the diary, her "drug" and "vice" for several months(9). By the end of the decade, however, her anxiety about keeping a diary had receded - not least because her earlier loneliness and isolation was gone, had surrendered to a bustling life of extroversion, of Parisian activity, travel, new acquaintances and explorations. One might say she had found an equilibrium. Apart from a number of periodical contributions she also published three books, and this was a strong public counter-

balance to any tendency to an exclusive focus on a private journal. The road from the poetical House of Incest to the more easily intelligible Winter of Artifice was part of the same shift outward. "The diary was once a disease" she wrote: "Now it is to write not for solace but for the pleasure of describing others, out of abundance" (AN.ii.205). It had changed, she asserted, was no longer an obsession, a probing instrument of self-vivisection, but rather a chronicle of experience and outer events, achieving even - as Miller noted with characteristic exaggeration in his praising "Un Etre Etoilique"- that rare "objectivity which alone the one who has realized himself attains"(CosE.276). One thing which did not change, however, was that it determined her ideas on literature.

By the middle of the decade, then, Anais Nin's literary resources were still founded on feeling and personal intuition, but now there was also a strong journalistic, documentary, almost photographic penchant, the flavour of immediacy and intelligibility. As Ian MacNiven said: "like D.H.Lawrence, she believed that the heart would not, if allowed free reign, betray the mind" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.48). It is important to keep in mind that this sensuo-journalistic aesthetic, she felt, was applicable to both outer reality and inner worlds. As in her diary, then, her approach even to innermost psychological "truths" and obsessions was not private or obscure but 'realistic' and aimed at an audience. Throughout the second half of the decade, she set this ideal against Henry Miller's 'art'. To his occassional attacks on the diary as "anti-art" (AN.ii.255), she responded by building up an argument against his 'art', which she now saw as characterised by distortion, invention, and transformation. Contrary to what she had felt when she first met him, in contrast also to the impression of unadulterated immediacy conveyed both in Cancer and in much of his later work, Miller's writing, Anais Nin now maintained, was fiction and quite artificial. It was becoming increasingly infected by a Proustian, "almost scientific" (Miller)(AN.ii.48) focus on the past.

Her opinion about the value of 'art' had changed markedly. She still admired Miller, but she pitied him as well. "The artist. Transmutation. The inhuman transposition of life into remembrance. He is not living in the present. He is always remembering"(AN.ii.250).

'Art', she now felt, led the artist away from 'life'. Miller's preoccupation with the past, coupled with his grandiose yet ineffective attempts to conquer the realm of ideas, were part of the artist's freedom to invent - but it was a freedom which was dearly bought. Anais Nin saw "the most tragic of all truths", namely Miller's admission that he was now interested only in writing: "Life does not interest me" (AN.ii.89). Lawrence Durrell is quoted as a witness: "Henry could be a real man if he were in life and not a writing machine"(AN.ii.256).

Anais Nin, then, saw herself not as an 'artist' in the above sense, but as a journalist, who was still intensely interested in 'life'. In particular she was fascinated by her own life, recording microscopically and 'faithfully' every little detail. In her writing she was a journalist, while paradoxically in life she was something of an illusionist herself. Miller invented and distorted in his writing (she said), but she invented and distorted in 'life'. She self-consciously filled her world with romantic fantasies and illusion, with exotic costumes, bric-a-brac, and fragrances. She even bathed in tea in order to have a darker skin. Anais Nin was true to life, and even objective, but, as Ian MacNiven said: "illusion was a part of her life, and in recording her life she had to set down illusions too" (Mosaic. xi.H.2.40). True, in the second half of the decade her need to intoxicate herself in a world of self-created illusion may have lessened somewhat, and in the diary she flaunted the values of immediacy, truth, precise observation, realism: "I am not interested in fiction. I want faithfulness"(AN.ii.233). Still, her assertion that Miller's invention, retrospection and transformation lead "away from the truth"(AN.ii.110), ring somewhat less true in view of her own strenuous efforts to shape her own life - her preeminent subject matter - according to the precepts of an occasionally garish romanticism. David Gascoyne spoke of her

> taste for the theatrical and the picturesque, such as is evident in the Moorish décor with which she surrounds herself, the 'barbaric' jewellery, the incense burning, the glass tree, and other exotic stage properties that she requires in order to convince herself that she is leading an intensely interesting life. (DG.ii.49)

Revealingly, she was very angry when André Breton proved not at all "poetically and sensitively alert to the atmosphere of my life" (AN.ii.247). As Ian MacNiven noted: "Illusion in life, illusion in the Diary, and illusion in the novels: Nin's version of the heraldic universe permeates her life and art" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.41). Nevertheless, she stubbornly believed that her perception of reality was more or less unblemished, and although she had to concede that at times Miller's distortions were a means of "attaining reality" or "a greater truth", she stuck to her preference of "the untransformed material", her "instantaneous sketches"(AN.ii.110f).

Perhaps the word "preference" is not wholly accurate. In August 1936 Anais Nin spoke of her "fear of transformation" and correlated this with her "fear of loss, change and alteration"(AN.ii.111). A psychological problem (which was rooted, it seems safe to say, in her difficulties about her father and which led to her subsequent sense of exile and rootlessness), she glibly analysed as keeping her from 'art' as defined by her teachers, Miller and Otto Rank. The artist "is the deformer, and inventor"(AN.i.300) Rank had argued, and Anais Nin seems to have accepted this definition: "The transformation required of creation terrifies me. Change, to me, represents tragedy, loss, insanity"(AN.ii.111). Although Rank once called her "a myth-maker" (AN.i.281), she was no artist in his sense of the word. Consequently, her writing, even her diary, tended, as she believed, not to stray from reality. Like Perlès' penchant for minute details and tiny delicacies, her 'realistic' vision was a result of her fear of change, of loss, her need for familiarity: "I want to stay inside of untransformed human life" (AN.ii.288). When she felt the impulsion to invent and fictionalise and fantasise, she restrained herself - or so she claimed. She was after all not interested in fiction.

Anais Nin felt a firm commitment to the 'truth', a truth she usually associated with psychological reality, rather than only "externals, or surface reality"(DLB.300). The style of her writing, in her view, had to accord with rigidly mimetic demands. Her concern was "with exploration, discoveries, tracking down elusive states of mind, of feeling" (AN.ii.209) and this, she seemed to think, was not always aesthetically pleasing, less so at any rate than the work of the 'inventing'

and 'deforming' artist with his "sensuous joy of expression" and sole concern "with communication"(AN.ii.209). One could communicate and not say anything. She always wanted to say something. "My own style is simple as in my father book, direct, like the diary. Documentary" (AN.ii.62). Her own terseness and accuracy she set against Miller's "sensuous pleasure in writing"(AN.ii.209), his flow and rhythm, joyous play and sovereign disregard of meaning. "Henry often does not care for meaning"(AN.ii.209). She herself, she claimed, never lost sight of "the meaning, the contents"(ibid.). Even the nightmarish House of Incest, she felt, was not subjective and obscure, but rather, easily interpretable in the light of psychological realism. "Winter of Artifice" actually reproduces to a large extent the straight narrative mode of the diary; it was "objective", as Durrell said in a letter (AN.ii.204). In the latter part of the decade then, Anais Nin presented herself as a non-imaginative writer, a journalist, reflective rather than inventive, even while exploring her "favorite realm" (AN.i.277), the dream, the symbol, those areas, in short, generally associated with romantic fantasy and subjectivity. But the dream had nothing vague about it for her; dream and symbol were unquestioned and calculable inner realities: "I am so familiar with its technical aspects"(10). She was a journalist, even a realist, in the sense that when she described reality, especially what she called "inner truth" (DLB.300), she felt it was devoid of all aesthetic stilisation, idealisation or fantasy, and thus, as she insisted, not unintelligible. It was a concept of writing not devoid of incongruencies - unless one accepts wholly her (Laurentian) premises, namely that one can proceed by way of "instinct" and "sensation" and "feeling" and still remain lucid. In 1939 she wrote to Lawrence Durrell:

> Any time you wish I can give you a clear intellectual summary of the meaning of Winter of A. and even of House of Incest. Sensation makes you find the symbols - the sensual image - but underneath it is guided by a vision, a sense. It isn't blind. (Mosaic.xi.H.2.7)

As we have seen, Miller's writing, she insisted, was blind at times, blind and meaningless. In a curious mixture of self-admiration and a sense of frustration she had noted in October 1935: "It is clear now that I have more to say and will never say it as well, and he has less to say and will say it marvellously"(AN.ii.61f).

In an important discussion in the Booster days she stressed that the process of slow transformation which Miller and Durrell associated with art, a process the former had once likened to "the transformation achieved by time which turns carbon into a diamond"(AN.ii.110), was no real necessity: "I asserted that such a process could take place instantaneously"(AN.ii.232). Anais Nin, journalist, referred them to her "Birth" story (later published in Twice a Year) which varied, as she said "very little in its polished form from the way I told it in the diary immediately after it happened"(AN.ii.232). The only reason she rewrote at all was for "a greater technical perfection"(AN.ii.232). She might have said the same of her "Winter of Artifice" novelle, the abovementioned "father book"(AN.ii.62), or of her first contribution to the Booster, called "Le Merle Blanc". This was also an almost direct transcript (albeit translated) from her diary, the record of a visit to the Palais de Justice where she witnessed a madman being brutally interrogated by an arrogant psychiatrist(AN.ii.191).

Anais Nin's attitude to 'creation', to 'art' in the Millerian sense, however, betrayed a certain ambivalence. Brassai spoke of her acute disappointment in what she felt to be Miller's tendency to twist and distort, to exaggerate and caricature(HMGN.163f). But this was only a part of the picture. Indeed, she could scarcely have been unaware that even her own view of things, although perhaps more immediate, was not at all free of stylisation, illusion and distortion, the diary a result of painful selection and distillation, her aesthetic sense not at all wholly subject to the law of 'truth' or 'faithfulness'. Especially as far as her depictions of psychic interiors, her 'reality' of the dream, were concerned, one would tend to agree with Lawrence Durrell who emphasised their subjectivity and personal quality(AN.ii.204). On a more sober level, aesthetic choices sometimes overrode historical 'truth"' precisely in the manner of Henry Miller. "Le Merle Blanc" of the Booster, for example, later served well as the second part of her portrait of Antonin Artaud - although the madman with the white sparrow was a nameless sufferer.

Miller's more sweeping imaginative mode, which was based on aesthetic selection, opened to him realms wholly inaccessible to her own careful probings. She realised this. It was her 'truth' opposed to his 'higher reality', 'faithfulness' as opposed to 'imagination', her accuracy faced with his "genius" and "greatness"(AN.ii.119). She called his writing: "Cosmic Wind"(AN.ii.205). One form of distortion, however, she came to reject vehemently towards the end of the decade; this was Miller's burlesque twist of mind, his dada sense of humour and comical destructiveness. In the beginning, she had regarded it as a part of his vital "ecstatic writing"(AN.i.174), his obscene caricatures and crude jokes as weapons in the angry struggle with convention. Indeed she had been thankful to him for their tonic and liberating effect: "Henry is dissolving my old gravity with his literary pranks, his satirical manifestoes, his contradictions, paradoxes, his mockery of ideas, his change in moods, his grotesque humor"(AN.i.116). She was thankful for the "quiet" days in Clichy, so removed from the quiet days of her pre-Millerian life. Although low comedy is singularly absent in the body of her work, the first and very hesitant appearances of "a sense of humour" in her diary are celebrated in Miller's "Un Etre Etoilique". Miller had every reason to celebrate these rare blossoms.

After a time, then, Anais Nin began to react against that coarse spirit of irresponsibility, interpreting it no longer as the mark of healthy anarchism, but as a sign of the deepest inhumanity. His bawdy-house jokes and burlesque sorties were "a means of destruction", as he himself said (AN.ii.63), but Anais Nin now felt that they were in fact without real purpose or goal. It was destruction for destruction's sake, and she did not like that.

It is a curious fact that her antipathy to this ribald clownishness erupted when Miller moved to the Villa Seurat. His life there was far less boisterous, far more settled and tamed, than ever before. He was certainly no more irresponsible than before. One might suggest, however, that it was Anais Nin who realised that to this crude and gaudy area of Miller's experience she had no access. She did not understand. Despite the fact that she had learned so much from him, that his development as a writer owed much to her, this was one of the few

uncultivated regions her civilising hand could not touch, a "Wild Park", he would have said, remaining exclusive to him - and his burlesque friends Perlès and Durrell. Her resentment was ill-concealed. Like Lawrence Durrell, Miller had a special comical nose for the monster, the freak in man. Durrell said: "We describe giants and freaks in order to illustrate instincts and inclinations that are infinitely more attenuated in real life"(Alyn 46). Miller thought so too. But Anais Nin disgreed, saying that "exaggerated men and women" (AN.ii.258) need be no freaks, but rather glowing representatives of mankind. Two worlds clashed: "Henry's definition of human is the one who drinks, forgets, is irresponsible, unfaithful, fallible. Mine is the one who is aware of the feelings of others"(AN.ii.89).

Miller's amoral, caricatural and dissecting outlook with its acute lack of compassion came to offend not only her feeling that one should report reality as one saw it, and not distort it for effect's sake. It also came up against that humanity which she persistently ascribed to herself, an attitude which found expression in her involvement with Gonzalo More and his 'revolutionary' activities, in her much advertised magna mater role, her obsession about caring for her needy acquaintances. Also, Miller's jokes were in her opinion little more than a waste of time and energy (AN.ii.325), and therefore a sign of ingratitude for all she had done for him (Mosaic.xi.H.2.44). She felt obliged to counteract Miller's playful tendency to dissipation.

In a sweeping, if revealing, generalisation she once said: "The key to Henry's work is contained in the word burlesque. What he writes is a burlesque of sex, a burlesque of ideas, a burlesque of Hamlet, or Bergson, or Minkowski. A burlesque of life" (AN.ii.62). To this part of Miller's character and writing Anais Nin could not but feel a complete stranger. She disparaged it with all her heart. The possibility that ribaldry and caricature were perhaps as deep a necessity to him as his 'cosmic' flights, she may have sensed (see Black Spring Boost in the third Booster)(B.iii.27). But she did not accept it. With indignant disappointment she identified this ribald streak with the Villa Seurat, with Miller's old Cancerian cronies who sometimes congregated there. She came to think of his studio, at times, as a place of dissolution, of destructiveness, mediocrity and superficiali-

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ty. With characteristic modesty she noted in 1935: "What I feel is too deep and too human for that"(AN.ii.62). She now wrote in her diary: "I do not belong to the Villa Seurat"(AN.ii.65). She rejoiced when in the Booster heyday she "saved" Lawrence Durrell from a "horizontal" (i.e. superficial) evening with Miller and Perlès (AN.ii.266). As David Gascoyne said: "she was indisputably a beautiful, fascinating and highly gifted woman" (Labrys.v.62), but she was also enervatingly self-centred and seems to have had very little sense of humour.

Still, the association between Miller and Anais Nin never cooled completely and after apodeictic statements of dissociation and estrangement - "Villa Seurat seems like sand, a sponge, dissolution"(AN.ii.85) - the diary habitually finds her back in his company, talking "vigorously and marvelously"(AN.ii.248) with her disapproved of Villa Seurat friends. Miller and Anais Nin co-operated, albeit with greater detachment, on "a creative, an imaginative, a more impersonal level" (AN.ii.206). She wrote in 1935: "I was not natural with Henry, I played the role of the ideal confidante he needed for his writing" (AN.ii.15). Like so many of the other influences in her life, Miller did not escape the almost inevitable rejection after a period of great flowering. However, by contrast with Rank, Artaud, Allendy and others, he never completely dropped out of her Paris diary, and even in the Booster autumn of 1937 their friendship was still very much alive: "The universe expands"(AN.ii.248). Burlesque or no burlesque, their relationship survived. As Ian MacNiven said: in the Paris years "Nin's disagreements with Durrell and Miller did not cloud their friendship" (Mosaic.xi.H2.42) and so, in spite of her dislike of the Booster, she did accept the post of Society Editor; in spite of calling it an unforgivable waste of time, she offered her time to it, contributing not only the aforementioned "Le Merle Blanc" and "A Boost for Black Spring", but also "The Paper Womb" as well as a more poetic excerpt from her "father" book, entitled: "Soundless Keyboard Orchestra".

Notes

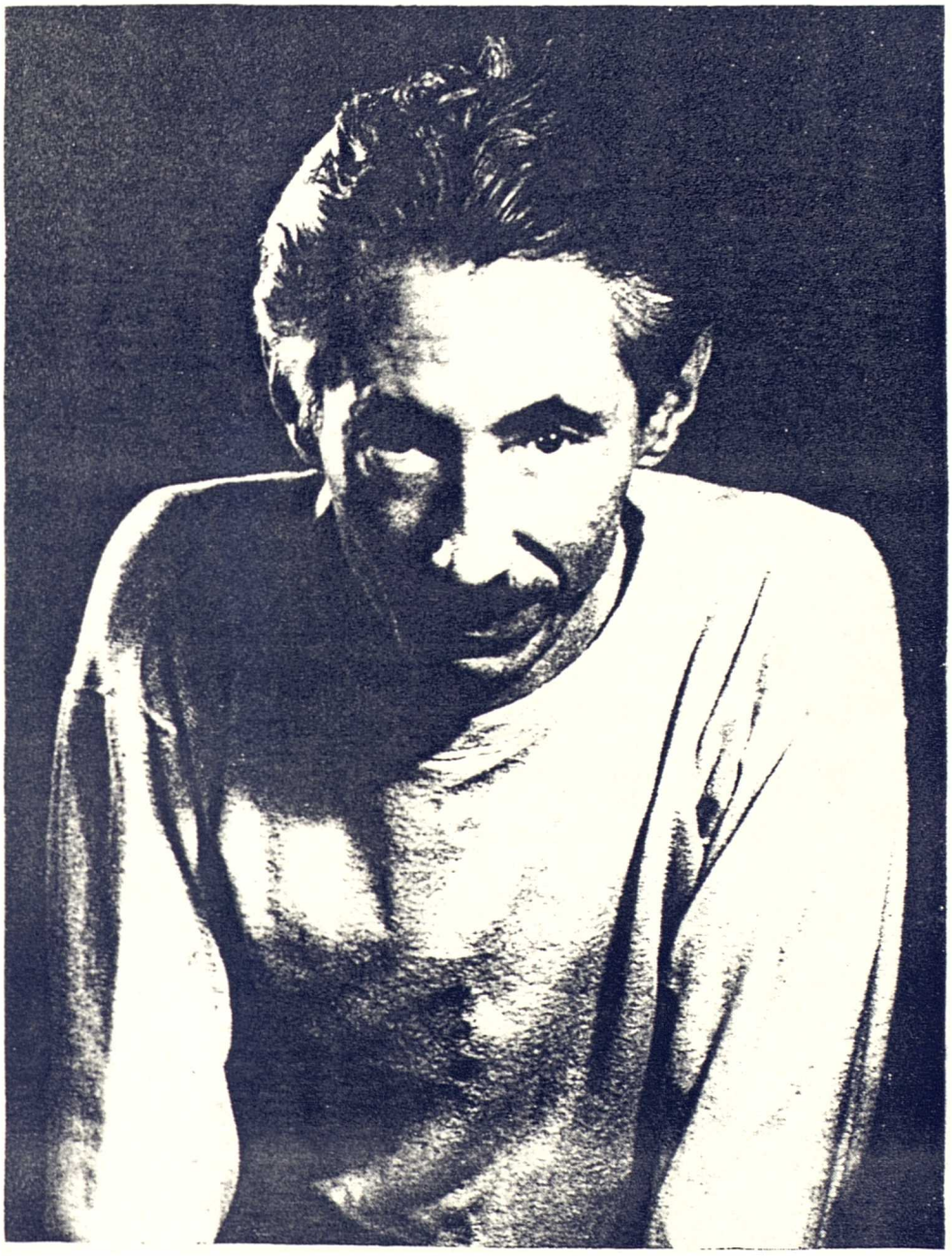
1. Martin 302. Walter Lowenfels "Unpublished Preface to Tropic of Cancer" (MR.v.481-491).
2. AiP.267; AN.ii.269.
3. WRHMAN.7W. Root says the same of Miller by the way.
4. AN.ii.233-236.
5. AN.i.197; Mailer 372.
6. AN.ii.103, 89.
7. We cannot agree with G.Stuhlman and J.D.Brown who threw Miller and Anais Nin together, saying that both "refused to become engaged in the surface ideologies , politics, causes"(LtAN.17; DLB.288).
8. Mosaic.xi.H.2.41. Anais Nin deleted this sentence from the letter when reprinted in her 1934-1939 journals (AN.ii.162).
9. AN.i.344, 312, 317.
10. AN.i.277, 317.

IV. Henry Miller and Michael Fraenkel : "The only man in the world who's alive" and the Philosopher of Death.

In a lively contribution to a collection of articles on his English friend, Miller described "The Durrell of The Black Book Days", saying that "we were usually three then, the musketeers of the rue de la Tombe-Issoire: alias Perlès, Durrell, and myself"(Moore 96). Anais Nin too spoke of "the Three Musqueteers" in a 1959 letter to Durrell (Mosaic.xi.H.2.55). In her view, however, and in the opinion of Lawrence Durrell, the third member of the trio was not Perlès but Anais Nin (AN.iii.7). It would seem an unrewarding task to try to sort out this incongruity. At least as far as the Booster/Delta enterprise was concerned, Perlès rather than Anais Nin was the third of the burlesque trinity. Whether, however, a burlesque "Miller-Durrell-Perlès-triumvirate" (Corr.114) is referred to, or the warm friendship between Anais Nin, Miller and the newly arrived Lawrence Durrell - "It is while we talk together that I discover how we mutually nourish each other, stimulate each other" (AN.ii.231) - one thing is certain, it was these four who formed the Villa Seurat's innermost circle. There were other friends and associates participating occasionally both in the group's more serious enterprises and its antics as well. In the chapters which follow this introduction of the chief protagonists of Miller's Paris, there will be occasion to discuss in detail those part-time members who made their contribution to the Booster venture. Some of them have been mentioned before: Moricand, the sinister astrologer, Hans Reichel, Miller's teacher in aquarelles, esoteric David Edgar, the Booster's publicity man, Brassai, the Transsylvanian "Eye of Paris", the ex-surrealists David Gascoyne and Raymond Queneau, the charming Betty Ryan, Abraham Rattner, whom Miller called "the Boddhisattva Artist", and others. In this chapter, however, a poet and philosopher will be discussed, whose influence on Miller and the Villa Seurat group was profound. His name was Michael Fraenkel. According to Alfred Perlès, Fraenkel, who owned the house at Villa Seurat 18, was the fourth member of Miller's "inner circle", before Lawrence Durrell came to Paris in 1937. He ranked very high among Miller's "closest associates" (MFHM.132).

Of Jewish origin, Fraenkel was born in Lithuania in 1896. His parents emigrated to America, and he grew up in New York. He came up the hard way, said Perlès. He worked his way through college and later earned a fortune selling books. Ford speaks of "a meteoric career as an encyclopedia saleman"(Ford 292). He also speculated on the New York Stock Exchange. By the time he was thirty, he had made enough money (as he had promised himself) to be able to stop working. In 1926 he left New York with, some said, 100 000 dollars, and came to France. In Paris he founded in 1930 the Carrefour publishing company with his friend, the poet Walter Lowenfels. Carrefour issued that same year not only their joint manifesto Anonymous: the Need for Anonymity, but also Lowenfels' USA with Music, and Werther's Younger Brother, Fraenkel's first important work. A year later Lowenfels introduced Miller to Fraenkel. An intensive exchange began, as they formed what they called the "death school". From 1932 to 1934 Fraenkel was in the Philippines selling books again. In that period he made another 50 000 dollars. On schedule, he then returned to his "palatial ground-floor studio" in the house he owned at the Villa Seurat 18. In 1936 Carrefour published both Death in a Room, Poems 1927-1930 and Bastard Death, The Autobiography of an Idea. That same year Fraenkel left Paris for good, travelling first to Spain, and, when Franco's uprising surprised him in Ibiza, on to New York, Mexico City and Puerto Rico.

By the time the Booster was launched, Fraenkel had been away from the Villa Seurat for well over a year. When he left Paris Anais Nin noted in her journal: "Fraenkel left for Spain, saying that Henry is faithless to ideas and friendships. Henry quickly forgot him"(AN.ii.83). In a sense then a discussion of Fraenkel and Henry Miller might seem out of place in this introductory section. In point of fact, Miller did not forget Fraenkel at all. He became chief of the Booster's "Department of Metaphysics and Metempsychosis". More important, for well over two years after Fraenkel left Paris he and Miller continued their Gargantuan Hamlet correspondence, which Lowenfels thought evinced a "monumental friendship"(MR.v.484). The second half of this enormous exchange, in fact, was composed after he had left France. Fraenkel was even then a presence in the Villa Seurat.



Michael Fraenkel

Although Carrefour continued issuing his writing, in time Fraenkel's work disappeared into oblivion. He is chiefly remembered as the grotesquely intellectual butt, a stingy, inhuman monomaniac, whom Miller and Perlès relished duping in Tropic of Cancer, in My Friend Henry Miller and a number of other works. But in the years before the war, things had been different. His books and essays were read and respected, his poems printed in transition, his philosophy which centred on what he and his friends called the "death theme" was felt to be so pertinent that in the early 1940s an entire little magazine was founded and dedicated to him. To this New York review, entitled Death and edited by Harry Herschkowitz, Miller, Yvan Goll, Benjamin Peret, Victor Serge and others contributed (Hoffmann 373). Though one reviewer writing for the Cleveland Plain Dealer evidently dismissed Fraenkel as an "out-and-out lunatic" (Death.i.1.62), though Cyril Connolly apparently thought Fraenkel did not "know how to write English" (Hamlet 230), his books were praised by literary celebrities like Aldous Huxley, Stuart Gilbert, Havelock Ellis and Artur Lundkvist. Even a hesitant George Orwell said of Bastard Death in a review for the New English Weekly in 1936: "I will take a chance and say that it is a remarkable book" (CE.i.249).

Moreover, Fraenkel's repeated claims should not be taken lightly, that it was his "death philosophy", communicated in "many great evenings of death talk" (MR.v.484), which finally allowed Henry Miller to synthesise his chaotic inner state and startling experiences and mould them into Tropic of Cancer. "The Death Theme had struck home", said Fraenkel in "The Genesis of The Tropic of Cancer" (HR.46). Anais Nin, who did not like him personally, noted angrily that he went as far as asserting "that Black Spring was the result of all the talks that took place between Henry, Walter Lowenfels and Fraenkel" (AN.ii.44). Alfred Perlès, who did not like him either, contended in My Friend Henry Miller: "To hear him, it would seem as though Miller could never have written Tropic of Cancer had he not had the good fortune to meet Michael Fraenkel circa 1930-1931" (MFHM.126). Indeed, Fraenkel's claims were immoderate, so exaggerated that they tend to blind one to the very real debt Miller and the other Villa Seurat habitués owed him. His own version of the story appeared in Death. It was taken from a journal entry of 1941:

In 1932 I wrote The Weather Paper ... in the small private circle in which it moved the manuscript had important, I might even say decisive results; some of them are beginning to manifest themselves only today. It served to define and crystallize a whole body of ideas relating to death, which had been slowly growing and developing under my influence among writers of such diverse temperaments and methods as Walter Lowenfels, Henry Miller, Anais Nin, Alfred Perlès, etc. ... For Miller it proved the determining factor to set his face definitely in the intellectual direction he has pursued ever since. (Death.i.l.61f)

From the vantage point of a later decade which has ostensibly separated the wheat from the chaff, which has accepted Miller and forgotten Fraenkel, such self-praise is not easy to stomach; Fraenkel will strike one as a self-important poseur and a poor loser (which he probably was). Still, one sometimes wonders at Time's selective faculties. For the greater part of the 1930s Miller himself wavered between repulsion and the deepest attraction; he laughed at the frail Fraenkel, who looked like Trotsky, caricatured him, abused him in the Hamlet correspondence - but he admired him as well. They were friends. "Your way of life is not my way of life, but at the extreme limits of our difference we meet and embrace", said Miller in 1936, calling their friendship "a struggle whose purpose is the attainment of a more deep and penetrating understanding"(Hamlet 132).

In 1933 Miller listed Fraenkel with those he called the "Life-Givers", with Whitman, Nietzsche, Jung and others (Martin 286). His long introductory letter to the philosophical Bastard Death, The Autobiography of an Idea ended in the words: "We have entered into the creation of a myth and we leave it to future mythologists to unravel. And so, my dear Fraenkel, taking you warmly by the hand, I go down with you into the tomb to await the hour of resurrection"(1). Fraenkel was accepted as companion, collaborator, even guide. An early letter to Emil Schnellock calls into doubt Miller's later insistence on a two-dimensional portrait of the miserly idealogue in the grip of an idée fixe. "I walked with F. along the Seine and I listened to a very wise man. I listened to a poet. I acted very humbly as his amanuensis in composing a certain paper - and I saw how two minutes later he could play the buffoon with the race-track man, an Armenian" (SatW.203). Fraenkel had fervour, thought Miller (AiP.255). In "The Genesis of the

Tropic of Cancer", Fraenkel himself quoted from two letters Miller had sent to him, epistles which were full of thanks and admiration. Of Werther's Younger Brother Miller said: "I am thinking only in superlatives"(HR.42). One need hardly say more than that one of these letters which Miller sent to China, expressing an enormous happiness, was accompanied by the very first copy of Tropic of Cancer. "Dear Fraenkel", it ends, "I don't know what to say to you, I am so happy..." (HR.56).

The culmination of their relationship, however, was the Hamlet correspondence, which was projected as "a thousand page book of ideas written in the form of letters", as Miller wrote to Count Keyserling. He and Fraenkel were going to cover "the whole problem of reality, including the super-reality (Surréalisme) of the French and the dream reality which the new forms of art are now taking" (IntHML.v.13). It was Fraenkel, "little F., so despised, so misunderstood, so tortured and bound up with his inner conflicts" (SatW.190f) who accompanied Miller on this journey, an adventure, a "thousand pages on all the varieties of death"(MFAP.126f), that was concocted in the Café Zeyer around the corner from the Villa Seurat cul-de-sac in 1935. This correspondence, which an English critic said was "not far from being the worst book ever written and published" (NEW.xvi.8.118) was, in fact, a continuation of their "death dialogue", and only ended when, shortly after the Munich Crisis, Fraenkel (again) accused Miller of treachery.

According to Perlès, who initially participated but dropped out after a month or so (his contributions are missing in the published correspondence), Miller never took the enterprise too seriously, while for Fraenkel the exchange was a matter of greatest solemnity. As Perlès, reports, Miller "went about it in a playful manner, in contrast to Fraenkel who held on to his tenuous theme and killed it by repetition and reiteration"(MFHM.130). Miller was the sovereign clown, Fraenkel the humourless fanatic.

In point of fact, Fraenkel's contributions were frequently no less playful, no less varied and comical. Moreover, whereas both writers sometimes lost themselves in the densest of cosmological speculation, Fraenkel's theoretical discursions frequently (not always) strike one

as even-keeled, sometimes lucid, subtle and profound. Miller is often entirely incomprehensible. Unfortunately, it is often easier to accept and simply to reiterate the chorus of pronouncements of Miller's entourage, who found the death philosopher no match for their hero - Delta printed a side-cut against Fraenkel by Lawrence Durrell (D.ii.43). This is easier than working one's way carefully through the correspondence and giving Fraenkel's letters impartial consideration. And yet, judging from his letters, he was not the freak Miller and friends made him out to be, but a man possessed of an acute, widely critical yet strangely tortured intelligence. He also comes across as a man trying desperately to guard against Miller's mercilessly effective caricatures. In the latter half of the correspondence, Fraenkel struck back, and, indeed, his blows were well aimed, not at all easy to counter, at any rate, and reminiscent of Anais Nin's strictures. Unlike Anais Nin Fraenkel was a victim himself, and he bitterly criticised Miller's harsh inhumanity and his tendency to regard human beings as monsters:

> You hate people, and you will never miss an opportunity to hold them up to ridicule and derision. And God knows they give you plenty of opportunity for that! It takes a lively human interest in a man to see him at his true gravitational center, but your tendency is invariably to see him precisely where, for one reason or another, he happens to be off center and then distribute the whole weight of his personality accordingly. A slant of the man becomes the whole man; a temporary disposition the permanent organic cast. Figuratively speaking, people are always slipping on a banana peel with you - so that you may have your little laugh! (Hamlet 309)

In the end, however, Miller's caricatures won through, and it did not help that Fraenkel's widow quiely took her revenge, when for a small new edition of the letters (1962), she chose those blurbs which highly favoured her husband. There were quite a few, including one which reads:

> Miller is a mass of nursery taboos and violent reactions to them which he mistakes for originality. Fraenkel's mind is deep and narrow, Miller's broad and shallow, it ought to have allowed him to balance Fraenkel in the correspondence, but Miller is not of equal stature and weight. (Hamlet.back cover)

Whatever one's own conclusion, the very fact of their vast correspondence, what Miller's biographer called "possibly the most elaborate scheme of artistic collaboration in the twentieth century" (Martin 312), speaks against his own sketches of the eccentric in "Max" and Cancer. In his penulitmate letter, Miller referred to the correspondence as "an act of friendship and of mutual esteem", and, inspite of all differences, he also called it "a positive act of revelation"(Hamlet 334).

Although in that same letter, dated January 1938, Miller also told his correspondent that his ideas did not really interest him very much, and although he did add jokingly in parentheses : "A thousand pages or so, yes - but then anything interests me to the extent of a thousand or so pages"(Hamlet 334), he was still drawn to Fraenkel's "philosophy of death". Before we inquire what exactly constituted these ideas on death, it should be said that for a reader with a soberly rationalistic turn of mind, many aspects of Fraenkel's work, though by no means all, are difficult to understand. In Purpose, a magazine to which the Villa Seurat writers contributed frequently in the latter part of the decade, an admirer of Fraenkel, the London psychologist Neil Montgomery said of a collection of his essays: "I imagine that most of the readers of Michael Fraenkel's book, and they can hardly be many for years to come, will find it amazing because of its strangeness" (Purpose.xi.4.215). Orwell admitted of Bastard Death with remarkable candour: it was an interesting book but one written for "people with minds more abstract than my own" (CE.i.248f). Comprehending Fraenkel was, however, not only a matter of grasping abstract ideas, though Anais Nin for one deplored his analytical way of thinking, "the black pest of the brain cells" as she called it (AN.ii.235). In order to understand his ideas properly one also needed to share a similar outlook on life, one which included a sense of the transcendental. Indeed, for all the lucidity of his prose style, "a concise, clipped language", as even Perlès had to admit, "with an elegance of style one hardly expects to meet with the treatment of such a subject"(MFHM.52), the image Anais Nin draws of a man who is "all mind, all ideas" (AN.ii.173) is one-sided to say the least. Perlès called him "a born poet"(MFHM 51) and Neil Montgomery went as far to say: "He is the half-born genius who has known the spiritual death of the

mystic"(Purpose.xi.4.219). A reviewer for the Shanghai T'ien Hsia Monthly noted: "In another age or another hemisphere "he would be a mystic"(T'ien Hsia.x.2.198). The same critic, Brian Corbett, also said: "Fraenkel can only be valid for those who have to some extent shared his experiences" (T'ien Hsia.x.2.200). For a time, at least, Fraenkel was valid for Miller, for the feeling was that they had shared similar experiences.

If we attempt a summary of Fraenkel's "philosophy of death", we must again say that there were moments when even his first disciple, Walter Lowenfels, was unable to understand what the master meant (Ford 295). Undoubtedly, however, Fraenkel, who as Corbett pointed out considered himself to be something of a "highly sensitive individual barometer in which the trend of the world's spiritual weather may be read"(T'ien Hsia.x.2.198), focussed his mind on what he saw as the "spiritual death" of Western man. Modern man has died a "spiritual death"; this was Fraenkel's favorite theme, though contrary to what Jay Martin suggested - "All his vigor, all his ruthless intellect, went into one theme - death" (Martin 225) - it was by no means his only topic. Outer crises, said Fraenkel, war, social unrest, economic upheavals, were no more than manifestations of inner death, a result of this "death-principle" at work (T'ien Hsia.vi.3.225). There was no by-passing "death", no point in trying to find a remedy, no returning to the old "life". There was nothing to be done, all action was futile (Hamlet 344). Man, the individual, must recognise and accept and face his own "spiritual death". "There must be the knowledge and awareness of the death that has taken place" (Purpose.x.4.208). To become conscious of the fact of non-physical death was a first step: "I am alive, alive, that is, in the only way one can be alive today. In the awareness of death" (T'ien Hsia.vi.3.225). It was necessary, according to Fraenkel, to experience this awarenes to the fullest. In his contribution to the Happy Rock Fraenkel said: "We simply had to face and accept death, squarely and resolutely, take it inside, as it were, into our blood stream, consciously, deliberately, face and accept it in the inmost depths of our being, and - live it out"(HR.40). A new life was possible, inevitable, as Fraenkel promised, the moment "death" - he contrasts this with physical death, which he found far less interesting (MFBD.18) - has been passed through. "Live out the old death, and the

new life asserts itself at once"(HR.40).

To perceive the reality of "spiritual death" was itself no mean task: "Tell my femme de ménage in my living presence that I died and she won't believe"(MFBD.21). But to see and to accept it, "to incorporate the death into the living life-stream"(Purpose.xi.1.13) and to transmute it creatively was, according to Fraenkel, most difficult even for the most responsive soul: "For putting your best foot forward into Death, on the Extreme Shore: that is not so hard. What is hard ... is in bringing the other foot over"(2). The new life on the other side of this "spiritual suicide" was, in short, a reserve of the "truly exceptional or creative individual"(3), an artistic individual, in other words, whose work, as Brian Corbett noted, Fraenkel conceived "as an act of death - positive, subjective death, in which the artist yields some of his inner vision in the act of formulating it" (T'ien Hsia.x.2.198f). Through art "death" can be accepted, endured and transcended, and now the solitary individual, who has found a new life, might "by the force of his example, by the vitality he radiates, the emotional release he effects" actually stir to life the rest of the "inert mass of humanity" (HR.40)

Perhaps because it was so close to common romantic attitudes and yet so fanatically worked out, Fraenkel's "death theme" exerted a strong influence on Miller's imagination. These are the well-known opening lines of Tropic of Cancer: "I am living in the Villa Borghese. There is not a crumb of dirt anywhere, nor a chair misplaced. We are all alone here and we are dead"(Cancer 9). Plainly, Fraenkel was not the first to write about the "spiritual death" of Western man and Miller was aware of this. Spengler and Nietzsche and Lawrence had planted the seed in America. In fact, as time went by, Miller came to contend that Fraenkel's contribution was not that original after all: "Long before you and Walter Lowenfels developed the death motif Cendrars was singing about it" (Hamlet 206). Even in the hey-day of the Death School, Miller and Lowenfels mocked Fraenkel's preoccupation. Lowenfels later recalled: "Henry and I really joked about Fraenkel's death business - turning it into something else, something we could use in our business, which was, say what you like, writing"(AiP.256). And in Cancer Miller openly ridiculed much of Fraenkel's talk as abstract rub-

bish, "weird, ghostly, ghoulishly abstract"(Cancer 173). If Fraenkel did inspire Miller's book, he had fostered a rebellious, treacherous and unthankful child: "'The reason I wanted you to commit suicide ...' he begins again. At that I burst out laughing" (Cancer 173).

Part of his interest in Fraenkel may indeed have been rooted in what Hilaire Hiler described as a strong enthusiasm "for 'off beat', eccentric, neurotic and aberrant personalities"(IntHML.v.7). Fraenkel was food for his caricatural appetite. With characteristically brutal honesty Miller noted about the pitiable Max: "To-day I'm going to listen to you, you bugger ... listen to every nuance. I'll extract the last drop of juice - and then, overboard you go!" (CosE.23).

But in fact, Fraenkel's importance should not be reduced to his caricatural value, to his interest as a strange specimen of the human species. He was more than that, a crucial agent in Miller's 'philosophical' itinerary. He and Lowenfels, as Jay Martin said, were among the first genuine intellectuals Miller ever knew. Miller, the nobody of 1931, may have read Spengler and Nietzsche and Cendrars, but there was a difference between reading these and admiring how Fraenkel and his other pupil neatly and dexterously "stacked up the corpses of western civilization"(Martin 226). The talks about death had already begun the moment Miller met Lowenfels in April 1931, and they intensified when he moved in with Fraenkel (at the Villa Borghese/Seurat) for a few weeks shortly after: "We sang about it, we revelled in it, we mourned and cursed it - it was a festival, the Death Festival, as Miller called it"(HR.45). It was in these marathon sessions, in which the "avant-garde of death" (Lowenfels)(Ford 295) dissected their topic from every angle imaginable, that Miller, in the eyes of Fraenkel, actually found his voice. In a Hamlet letter of 1938, Fraenkel, while presenting a fine analysis of what he regarded to be the tension determining Miller's art, a tension between a capacity for understanding and a capacity for hate, both of which were essential, but which tended to rule one another out as well, recalled the early days of their friendship, when both understanding and hatred were at an excellent pitch: "Overnight almost you were transformed from a pulp littérateur to a hate-spitting genius"(Hamlet 298). In this letter, Fraenkel did not mention his own role in Miller's transformation,

perhaps he did not need to; in "The Genesis of the Tropic of Cancer" he did. As he recalled in that essay he advised Miller to discard the "literary style" which had flawed his early Crazy Cock, to write precisely as he spoke: "Write as you talk, I told him. Write as you live. Write as you feel and think" (HR.45). This advice was inestimable.

Furthermore, in part at least the way Miller thought was coloured by his own interpretation of Fraenkel's "death theme". Though he frequently laughed at the latter's philosophical "living-dying language" (Cancer 174f), in his Paris years he himself never altogether relinquished this "death" alphabet. Open Miller's discursive prose at random, and the word "death" almost invariably catches the eye.

An example: The Wisdom of the Heart of 1941 reprinted a fragment from his unfinished book on Lawrence. This article was entitled "Creative Death" and first published in Purpose. As the title suggests, it may be said to be an application of the "death theme" to Lawrence. It ended, as any book of Fraenkel's might have done, with the invocation: "To go forward into death!" - with the aim of achieving a foothold there "so that life may go forward once again. But this foothold can only be gained on the dead bodies of those who are willing to die"(4). Indeed, this may be the very section of his Lawrence brochure which he feared Fraenkel would regard as straightforward plagiarism (Martin 287). After all, as he had once readily admitted in an early letter to Emil Schnellock, "who opened my eyes to Lawrence if not F.?" (SatW.203).

In "Lawrence and the Death Process", Fraenkel put forward the following argument: although Lawrence had described and analysed the spiritual death of modern man "with a breadth of insight and emotion unparallel ed in our times" (Purpose.xi.1.13) he had failed to realise himself as an artist, because awareness, as we have seen, was just not enough. For a time this was Miller's view as well, and in his 1935 prefatory letter to Bastard Death he noted that Lawerence "failed precisely in the manner you indicate - because he was incapable of jumping with two feet to the other shore"(MFBD.39f). Lawrence failed as an artist, Fraenkel contended, because he attempted to evade "death" by positing a romantic remedy which was to be achieved in a

"mystical carnalism"(5). To Fraenkel's mind, and to Miller's as well, Lawrence did not confront "this death as part of an integral creative process in self mutation and renewal - that he evaded altogether. He failed to complete the circle"(6). Clearly, for a long time, Miller not only accepted Fraenkel's interpretation of Lawrence, he also credited his friend with going "a step beyond Lawrence"(MFBD.42). This preface to Bastard Death, incidentally, was written in November 1935 - well over a year after his first caricature of Boris had appeared in Cancer: "It sounds nutty to me, all this palaver about life and death and things happening so fast" (Cancer 172).

The title of the book of essays in which Fraenkel collected the Lawrence article was Death is Not Enough. "I am preoccupied with death not because I am interested in death, really", claimed Fraenkel in 1941: "What I am interested in is life. Death, as you see, is only the red herring" (Death.i.l.64). Still, though his ideas, as Miller clearly recognized, aimed at a renewal of life, at a spiritual rebirth (Hamlet 117), it was not long before he began to doubt whether Fraenkel had not got bogged down in the marshes. Death was not enough, said Fraenkel, but Miller came to wonder whether the view expressed in his Bastard Death letter still held true. Had Fraenkel really "more nearly succeeded in making than any other man in our time" the leap through "Death" into a new "Life" (MFBD.39f)? Was he really, as Miller had written to Schnellock, "a man, very much alive, a man with the Holy Ghost in his bowels"(SatW.190f)?

Towards the end of the Hamlet correspondence, Miller's attacks on Fraenkel increased, concentrating on the idea, that though the "death philosopher" may have described the route well enough, he had not, in fact, "died a real death", i.e. been reborn to a new spiritual awareness. In June 1936, he asserted that Fraenkel shied away from "the last hurdle"(Hamlet 169), and a year later, just as the first Booster was coming out, Miller composed a Hamlet letter in which he again acknowledged the importance of Bastard Death, but also voiced the suspicion that its author did not accept the "full implications" of his work for himself (Hamlet 291). Then, in January 1938, he bluntly fired a broadside into Fraenkel's flagship "I have died"(Hamlet 38) by saying: "this real death, as I hinted before, you have never gone

through"(Hamlet 332). Miller's dissociation was almost complete.

Fraenkel was touched to the quick, deeply hurt at this attack on "Michael Fraenkel the private person" (Hamlet 308f). But Miller would always insist that a man be the living proof of the truth of his ideas: "If a man cannot find salvation in himself all his words are futile"(WoH.249). Fraenkel was at a disadvantage, for his words were judged (by those who knew him) in the light of his anguished, egocentric and, on the whole, apparently rather unpleasant personality (Ford 302). Anais Nin for one noted after their first encounter: "He has written about Werther, much about death, and he could be Werther. He has no need to commit suicide. He has already died. I have never seen anyone so withered from within, so dead in life"(AN.i.110).

Fraenkel said that modern man had died a spiritual death - but Miller was certain that if he himself had died, he had also come through to the other side (Martin 286). When Lowenfels saw the first pages of Cancer, he exclaimed that the book ought to be called "I am the only man in the world who's alive" (MR.v.489). Miller had succeeded in the terms of the "death philosophy". Fraenkel had not. He never found "salvation in himself". He committed "spiritual suicide", as he said, in order to achieve that new life he was certain would assert itself once the "old death" had been lived out. But, according to Miller, for him it never did. Even "art", a form of positive "suicide", did not really help. He gave up writing poetry in 1931, not because he had come through to a new plane of existence, but because he had dried up at the source: "I seemed to have run completely dry"(DFNF.48). He felt wretched and later spoke of that "whole nervewracking winter of 1931" (DFNF.48). No new life offered itself. He was an unhappy man, and even the creative years of Bastard Death and Death in a Room were, as he later recalled, years of deep anguish (DFNF.45). Walter Lowenfels and Howard McCord entitled their biographical study The Life of Fraenkel's Death, and this was the paradox: Fraenkel was curiously lifeless, but not "dead" in the way he hoped he might be.

He was the son of an immigrant. If his life-story evinces all the constituent elements of the American Dream come true, it also manifests an alienation from society beside which that of Miller seems negligible. Alwyn Lee called Miller a symbol "of how deep a fissure has grown between our culture and its own origins, of how this century may exclude those apparently living in its midst" (3Dec.68). In Fraenkel's case, this fissure ran right through him. He was both inside and outside, a social winner and a monstrous outsider, a man of action and a recluse, a paradigm of entrpreneurial success and model of a deeply artistic mind. A "highly disturbed personality", as Hilaire Hiler remembered him (IntHML.v.7), he was ruled emphatically by both sides.

Throughout the decade, a conflict raged in "Michael Fraenkel the private person". In a Hamlet letter he traced this conflict back to his childhood and adolescence in America. The poor immigrant boy had to struggle hard in order to survive in a strange and hostile enviroment. His "first real struggle", he said in the letter, "an inner struggle - was with New York: New York the alien (1905-1914)" (Hamlet 247). He survived but at a terrible cost, an irreparable divide within his personality: "I did not go under. But I split, between myself that was New York and New York that was not myself" (Hamlet 247). In what he called a "geographical psychograph" he noted in his 1941 journal: "Or take New York 1917-1920: the steel death. The Split in full progress" (DFNF.45). There were times, Fraenkel said in the letter, when he believed that in London or Vienna or Paris he might overcome his "other self", the "demon"(Hamlet 248), that he might "recover what I had lost"(Hamlet 247). But in New York, in January 1937, he realised that there would be no evading the split, since it was a very part of his identity: "as I have held on to myself that is not New York and also to myself that is New York, I have preserved my identity, my dual identity which New York embodies for me in flesh and blood"(Hamlet 247). We will return to Miller's view of this division presently.

Merging with the personality split, the agonising implications of which are somewhat glossed over in the ostensible acceptance of a "dual identity", was Fraenkel's fixation on the "death theme". Where did it come from? As a young man, Fraenkel, whose first ideas on the subject were apparently stimulated by Goethe's Werther, fell tragically

in love with his older brother's girl. A period of deepest anguish followed, unfolding about the time America entered the War in 1917. The carnage in Europe, as Howard McCord suspects, "helped fix in his mind the idea that the preeminent experience of the twentieth century was death"(DLB.168). The trauma of war, as Fraenkel pointed out in his own Werther, corresponded to his own, ran parallel to what he later called a personal "process of attrition", and when both were over, Fraenkel "got up with the millions of others who got up from their trenches", and felt he had died. "All who have survived 1914-1918 are dead", including the non-combattant Michael Fraenkel (T'ien Hsia.vi.3.224). Werther's Younger Brother, which is more or less an autobiographical account of these experiences, set up, as Fraenkel noted with characteristic modesty, "the ultimate image of modern man's spiritual death" (HR.39).

In the early 1920s, then, his 'New York' self worked and slaved away, became "the greatest book salesman in America"(AiP.255), but all the while he was saying to himself: "I think we have all died" (T'ien Hsia.vi.3.224). It was not long before he came to relate this personal despair to his work as an entrepreneur, that he began to question how he lived and to call into doubt American society as such. When they first met in 1931, Fraenkel told Miller about this previous life, "the frenzied, masturbative existence of the American businessman who compensated for the unreality of his life with an hysterical and self-defeating desire to live, to enjoy, to possess"(Martin 226). The fact that, years later, Fraenkel likened the American business man to the Nazi thug in Germany, "action in each case resolves itself in the end to nothing more than a species of violence, the late-civilized form of barbarism" (Hamlet 258), shows his deep loathing for this existence - which was a part of himself, his "demon". Miller later, incidentally, also threw together Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and America, as the modern "carriers of the deadly germ", which (as Fraenkel himself may have thought) "will sweep the ground clear for a new way of life" (WoH.83).

By the time he was thirty, at any rate, as planned, Fraenkel abandoned the business life he loathed and left for France. "In America the violence goes mostly under the surface, under cover of business"(Hamlet 258). He was tired of it, or so it seemed.

In a long Hamlet letter, Fraenkel once explained how he saw America, what he thought of that horrible "sense of emptiness and frustration one experiences there" (Hamlet 262). He was convinced that somewhere in the beginning the American settler had failed to merge with the new land, with "the spirit of place", that he "neither transplanted the European tradition to the American continent nor planted an American tradition of his own". The American had "cut himself off from the old roots in the European soil; but did not sink new roots in the new"(Hamlet 253). He was left in a void, a manifestation of which, as Fraenkel pointed out, was American optimism, American actionism, and American individualism. "You see, for a fellow who is an individual, absolutely free from any and all restrictions and limitations that go with station and class, everything is possible, the sky is the limit"(Hamlet 251). The obverse side of this absence of tradition, however, was the fact that the "American is unsizeable, undefinable, nameless, anonymous, the Mass Man reduced to his ultimate term - zero (Hamlet 252). There was no foil against which he might define himself, and as far as the artist was concerned, he is denied the essential struggle against a cultural tradition - for there is none. "One cannot go forward, nor backward; neither live a tradition nor live it out; neither know the reassuring sense of past nor the quickening sense of future" (Hamlet 262).

Fraenkel's long discursive passage on America is particularly relevant as it was composed not in the hey-day of American expatriatism, but in January 1937, in Mexico City. Like Miller, he did not practice reconciliation with America as did many of their Paris contemporaries, including their friend Walter Lowenfels. Like Miller's, though only superficially for similar reasons, his alienation from America was lasting, and when he returned to New York in 1937, for all the demonic attraction it had for him, he still felt a stranger. "I should not want to live in America; I should not even want to be buried there. I prefer to rest among human bones, not the rusty skeletons of automo-

biles"(Hamlet 260).

Fraenkel abhorred America, went to France, and like Miller and like his friend Lowenfels, he "expected Paris to be the talisman that would transform aspirations into art"(Ford 292). As Hugh Ford noted, "in time, with the help of Carrefour, it did seem to perform that magic" (Ford 292). However, as was not the case with Miller, whose removal to France may be said to have helped solve most of his existential problems, Fraenkel's "inner conflicts" were not alleviated for long (SatW.190f). "Paris" did not ease his worries, did not ward off the periods of anguish we have referred to, did not reconcile him to himself. Fraenkel remained a haunted and divided personality, unhappy and unattractive. Mocking "the most elegant apostle of suffering that ever I've met", Miller describes Fraenkel/Boris as he listens to the plaints of the down and out Max: "He lies there like a human Bible on every page of which is stamped the suffering, the misery, the woe, the torture, the anguish, the despair, the defeat of the human race" (CosE.28).

Fraenkel hated his business alter ego, but in the early 1930s, after suffering financial losses in the 1929 crash, he travelled to the Far East, where he again "immersed himself in the profitable but stultifying routine of bookselling"(7). Miller called his trade a "racket", as indeed Fraenkel sold books that cost him two dollars for up to 40$ (8). The important point, however, was that Fraenkel returned, in a way that Miller never did, to the despised life he had cast off years before. In point of fact, it was precisely this division between "Michael Fraenkel of the record, the poet" and, "S.M. Fraenkel of the Phillipine archipelago", (Hamlet 332), as Miller called the merchant self, which fired his argument that Fraenkel had not died the proper death, had not passed through the ordeal so as to achieve a true integration of personality. Miller contended that his friend had "set up an alter ego on which to shove the blame"(Hamlet 337), that he was, in short, disloyal to himself, more so as he prided himself on his awareness and acceptance of the split: "it is the God in you, the man striving for perfection and for absolutism, which is horrified by the weak human being in you, the other abominable everyday self which has to transact the dirty business in order, as he wrongfully imagines, to

keep alive"(Hamlet 332f). Miller's caricatural eye, and that of his friend Perlès, did not hesitate to seize on this, by all accounts, agonising division. For them it was a feast. Perlès noted in "I Live on my Wits":

> There were two sides to Boris. On the one hand, he was the tedious, hair-splitting pseudo-philosopher sitting for hours on end plagiarizing some forgotten Latin author; and on the other, he was the tight, voracious, avaricious, money-grabbing bastard whom I was determined to worry and torture till he begged me to stop (Horizon.i.7.510)

He found no peace. When in 1936 he again set off, this time for Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico, Miller wrote to Durrell: "I see my friend Fraenkel trotting his legs off searching for the right place and never finding it"(Corr.87). Just as Fraenkel was aware of "the Split" in his own personality, he knew that he was searching for the right place in vain. "When I was in New York I should have stayed in New York; when I was in Paris I should have stayed in Paris", he said in 1935: "Instead, I have been wandering up and down the face of the earth, from country to country and city to city, looking for God knows what place, time, condition to come to rest"(Hamlet 39). His particular engrossment in the "death-theme" added to his difficulty in feeling a part of the world around him. Like the mystic's belief in the unreality of the world, Fraenkel's "death-theme", with its concomitant stress on "the inadequacy and futility of action" (Hamlet 344), actually made for a strange and disturbing dissociation from his surroundings, a concentration on a self which lacked what redeemed the self-obsession of Miller and Durrell, a garrulous bonhommie and a burlesque extroversion. Fraenkel often struck others as brutally egotistical. With reference to him, Anais Nin spoke of "the leprosy of egotism" (AN.ii.235). Indeed, Miller, not always a paradigm of benign humanity himself, turned with fury on Boris for not helping the wretched Max, establishing the link between this and the "death" philosophy: "You died, you say, and you've been holding one long funeral ever since. But you're not dead, and you know you're not. What the hell does spiritual death matter when Max is standing before you? Die, die, die a thousand deaths - but don't refuse to recognize the living man" (CosE.36). In the Hamlet correspondence he wrote to Fraenkel: "It is a common failing not to hear rightly when a man asks for simple things

like bread and money. People get strangely metaphysical then, you may have noticed"(Hamlet 333).

In October 1936, Fraenkel mentioned in a letter to Miller a new essay entitled "Active Negation". This article, collected in Death is Not Enough, Essays in Active Negation, varied the old death theme. It postulated something called "a negative mental climate" from which, as he (once again) hopes, "a positive one" will emerge. The idea was to deny everything that was old and traditionally handed down to clear the way for something new. "Out of the negation of the old a new world emerges"(T'ien Hsia.vii.4.352). Still, even though he focuses on a "new world of positive possibilities"(Hamlet 219), his primary attitude is emphatically a negative one. Symptomatically, almost, the idea "of doing a series of essays in Active Affirmation" never materialised (Death.i.1.14ff). This "negative mental climate" then also prevailed when Fraenkel scrutinised a locale, such as Paris, warm with tradition, a good part of the old world. He distrusted all feelings of attachment. What he wanted was a "miraculous land of Nowhere", or rather to make for himself a place where he was "more and more nowhere, more and more minus" so that one day the great plus might issue forth (Hamlet 221). Paris was less important than "Active Negation". Indeed, in the same letter he criticised Miller's sentimental celebrations of real life, "living men" in the streets of Paris:

> These are natural human emotions to come to all of us. But how well can we afford them? How well can we, last men...adventurers... perhaps also discoverers... afford them? It is tempting no doubt in a time of storm and stress like this to steal quietly into port and take refuge in the tradition. (Hamlet 220)

Fraenkel was a divided man, he wanted a place to come to rest, a port and at the same time he was suspicious of it. In "Active Negation" Fraenkel's position on tradition and culture ("home" in the widest sense) was unequivocal: "tradition is harmful from every standpoint" (T'ien Hsia.viii.4.349). But there was at least one standpoint from which tradition was decidedly not harmful. One needed it - if only to be able to "live it out", i.e. to reject it. About a year after he first mentioned his new recipe of "Active Negation" to Miller, he was

in America, deploring, as I have noted, the void, the empty talk, caused by the non-existence of tradition. "But thinking from roots, thinking that flows from roots, is the expression of a tradition, a culture - that's something else" (Hamlet 259). This affirmative view of tradition, naturally, did not prevent him from publishing his calls for "Active Negation as a Revolutionary Solvent" in Shanghai in April 1939. Equally, when he reminded Miller that they were "last men" and "adventurers" and should be wary of the warmth of human emotion, this did not mean that France had left him wholly indifferent either. In point of fact, in a contribution to the penultimate Delta he reaffirmed the old Europe-America opposition, which informed so much of Miller's writing and that of many expatriates. Fraenkel actually offered to the reader of the Villa Seurat magazine the clearest expression of the Dream of France and its antithesis, the Nightmare of America.

"The Day Face and the Night Face", begun in Paris in 1935, was a valedictory letter to his beloved, an American woman possessed of two contradictory aspects, a cold and harsh side, the "day face", and a "warm, volatile, responsive" side, which he calls the "night face" (D.ii.22). Self-critically aware of his "bad habit of thinking of people or experiences I have known profoundly in terms of ideas and mental patterns"(D.ii.23), the narrator correlates the woman's warm and human aspect to France and to the Unconscious, her cold and brutal aspect to America and the conscious mind. America is symbolised in the modern, streamlined, chromium and glass skyscraper, and America is the very incarnation of "brutal inhumanness" (D.ii.25). France on the other hand represents something he calls "the Holy Cross of human livingness". In Seine Port there is warmth, in New York no more than a powerful "mechanical principle" at work. "The human being is founded on God and in God, but in America the foundation is concrete" (D.ii.24). But if the harsh "day-reality" has triumphed in America, as it has in the woman who is leaving him, the narrator also discerns another America. In the hard land "which renders me a permanent exile, a man without a home" (D.ii.23), there is a also a lively undercurrent of "a strange, deeply throbbing life under the surface, a confusion of many things strong, vital, elemental" (D.ii.26). It is the "night face" of America, but it has been covered, almost smothered by the

other. The point is that the narrator sees in the woman divided into a night and a day consciousness "a concretization of the conflict that is going on within me, that has caused me so much unhappiness, that may be the cause of all my wandering and searching" (D.ii.23). Though choosing the night face, the narrator too has been haunted by the chromium day face, the "demon" of New York ...

This contribution to Delta in 1938 (reprinted in 1947), may be said to hold up a mirror to the contradictory aspects of the author's own personality. There are some inexplicably tender moments, moving passages such as the closing lines, which begin "Lift up your beautiful night face to me now" (D.ii.27). However, as Fraenkel disclosed in a later journal entry, "The Day Face and the Night Face" was written with the expressed purpose of illustrating an idea, his diagnosis of an absolute split of man's psyche into "two separate streams of day and night consciousness" (DFNF.46f). Indeed, the "mechanical principle" the narrator so deplored in American life, may be discerned as operating most smoothly in "The Day Face and the Night Face", mainly in the highly schematic way in which he attributes (as he himself admitted!) ideas to people, a point which Lawrence Durrell, incidentally, criticised in the very same issue of Delta -"The trouble with him is that for his purposes he denies experience: he only admits types of experience" (D.ii.43). It is also manifest in the overall plan of composition: this "love letter" was intended as an introduction to a whole series of epistles tidily expounding the same subject but from various angles, from the psychoanalytical, the Laurentian, the Marxist, etc. (DFNF.46). It may not surprise the reader to learn that the author, Michael Fraenkel the poet and Michael Fraenkel the exacting idealogue, Fraenkel the haunted expatriate, lost in an exile of "death", and S.M.Fraenkel who so neatly arranged his stock, scrupulously entering the debits and credits in his ledger, was to demonstrate that not one of these modes was actually capable of reconciling the division in the psyche....

Notes

1. MFBD.43; Hamlet 143.
2. MFBD.19; Ford 299.
3. HR.40; Ford 299.
4. Purpose.x.2.76; WoH.12.
5. Another of Miller's paraphrases is provided in the Hamlet correspondence (Hamlet 162).
6. MFBD.39f; Martin 287.
7. Ford 298; Horizon.i.7.505.
8. CosE.28; Ford 297.

B. THE VILLA SEURAT : "A FAMOUS LITERARY ADDRESS".

I. The Villa Seurat : Topography

The foregoing chapters have introduced Miller and his closest associates in Paris in the latter half of the 1930s. They have already occasionally been referred to as "the Villa Seurat group", or simply as "the Villa Seurat". The following section will focus on questions concerning Miller's circle as a literary community, as a functioning group, in other words, rather than as individual artists.

In a contribution to their collection on Modernism, a chapter entitled "Movements, Magazines and Manifestoes", James McFarlane and Malcolm Bradbury emphasised the multifarious and elusive nature of the movements usually associated with the term 'modernism''

> To look across them all, from movement to movement, from country to country, is to see not one interlocking system but a frenzy of forms and artistic energies variously expressed and variously justified, to see strange channels of influence and shifts of meaning, to recognize different conventions and symbols, as on maps drawn to different projections and scales. (Modernism 199)

McFarlane and Bradbury also argued that in their opinion even "the smallest of personal coteries" came under "the movement heading", were as much part of modernism's cartography as were the larger stylistic areas such as impressionism, expressionism, futurism, or surrealism (Modernism 199f). Indeed, it is at the higher level of abstraction that most difficulties at coherent definition present themselves, whereas it is "when one reaches the level of what are self-evidently national categories and distinctly local units that one is on safer ground" (ibid.200). Even further down the scale, on the level of the Rhymers' Club, or the Cafe Griensteidl or Zum Schwarzen Ferkel, "we know where we are: among distinctive coteries of people with a common debate or a cause to make"(ibid.200). Without forgetting that however

The Villa Seurat

small a coterie may be, an attempt must still be made to relate it to the more comprehensive artistic categories as well as to the developments in the society at large, in this chapter we shall be concerned mainly with the lowest level of the movement idea, that of local and distinct coteries. In particular, we will deal with questions such as the following: did the small crowd of friends around Henry Miller really merit the title 'literary group'? What were the distinguishing marks of Miller's circle and how was it structured? Did its members have a sense of group identity, in other words, did they see themselves as belonging to a coterie? Did there exist anything like group discipline or group standards? How did group activity manifest itself? Did the outside world perceive them as a group, or not? We will, in short, discuss the circle's self-perception, the view from the outside, and, while not losing sight of individual differences, we will point out a number of manifestations of group activity and group cohesion, as well as certain artistic and philosophical congruencies.

David Gascoyne, himself a regular visitor to Miller's studio in 1937 and 1938, once called the Villa Seurat a "famous literary address" (Labrys.v.59f). The Villa Seurat, which lent its name to Miller's circle, was a locale, an address, and a remarkable one besides. It was a quiet cul de sac in the fourteenth district situated in the triangle that is formed by the St.Anne psychiatric clinic, the Parc de Montsouris and the small Carrefour Alesia. On the latter square there were two bistros, the Café Zeyer and the Bouquet d'Alesia, much frequented by Miller and his cronies. There was also a metro station nearby. From this station one walked up the rue d'Alesia, turned into the rue de la Tombe-Issoire, and the third street on the left was the Villa Seurat. According to Alfred Perlès and Brassai the fourteenth district was not one of Paris' more luxurious quarters; on the contrary it was unsavoury, slummy and dilapidated. The Villa Seurat, however, was a notable exception, a veritable island of affluence. As Waverly Root observed, it "was not like any other address - it was unique, even in Paris"(WRPHM.7W). The houses in the quiet and elegant street were recently built, making it what Waverly Root called, "a sort of museum of modern architecture, in the best contemporary taste"(ibid.). Most houses were in the art déco style of the mid-1920s. They were usually divided into studio-flats. The rents were exorbitant. Miller's was as

high as $40 a month. Consequently, his neighbours were businessmen, diplomats, well situated foreigners and successful artists. Waverly Root was exaggerating when he compared a Villa Seurat studio with a penthouse in Sutton Place in New York, but it certainly was no poor street. Anais Nin, as I have said, paid Miller's rent. In her diary she claimed to have found the new abode for him in 1934 (AN.i.345). In point of fact, Walter Lowenfels, who was also an estate agent, gave Miller the hint (Martin 303). "It is a charming street", Anais Nin noted: "The houses are all small, and in various colors of stucco. Most of them have studio windows." And she went on to say: "Trees grow in the backyards, and sometimes in the front. The street is cobblestone and as the sidewalk is so narrow, one often walks in the middle" (AN.i.345). Miller's studio was on the first floor, on the left:

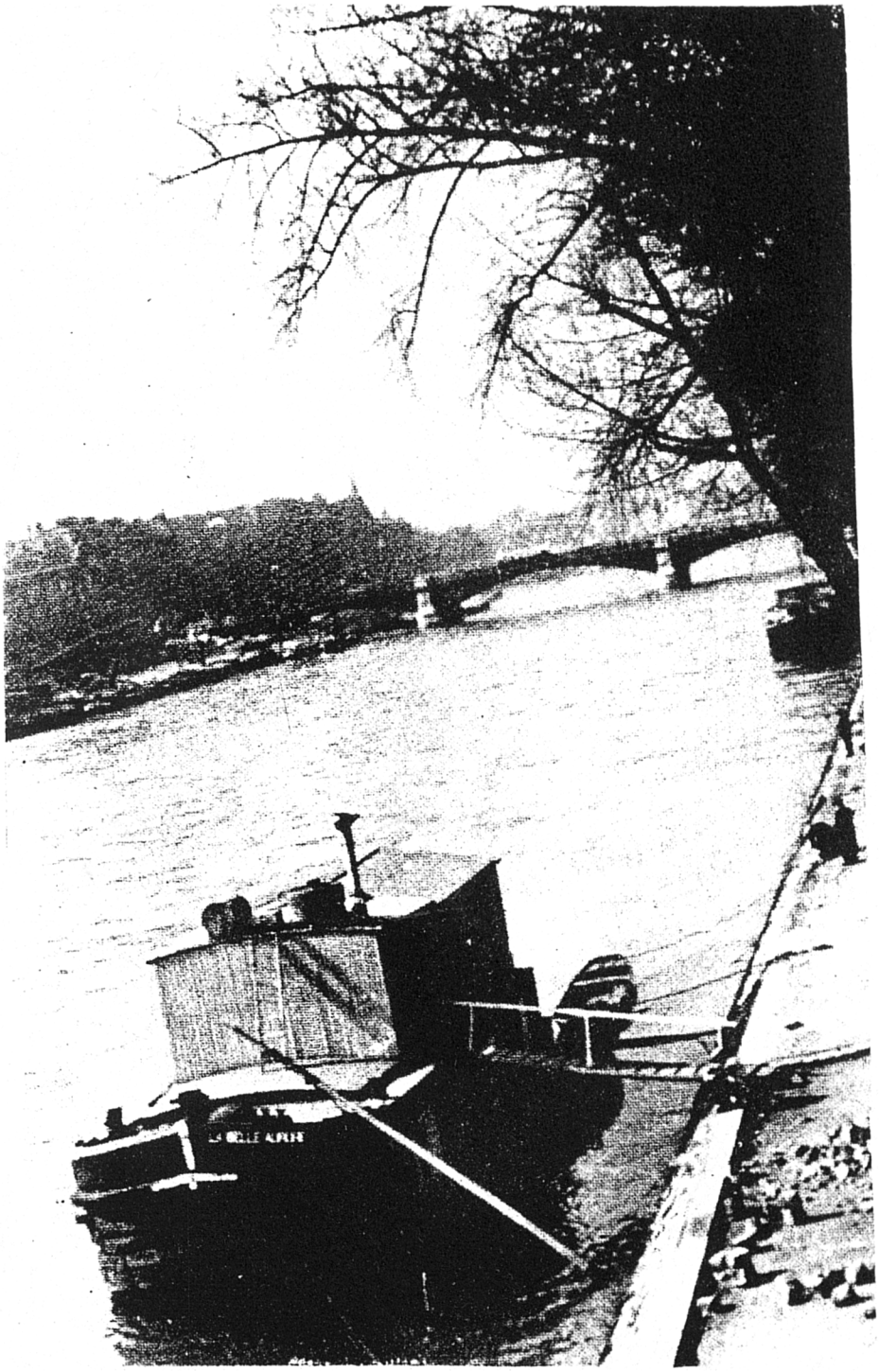
> The studio room is large, with its skylight window giving space and height. A small closet kitchen is built in under the balcony, where some people like to store away paintings, etc. A ladder leads up to it. The window opens on a roof terrace, which connects with the terrace of the studio next door. The bedroom is on the right-hand side of the entrance, with a bathroom. It has a balcony which gives on the Villa Seurat. One can see trees, and small facades of the pink, green, yellow, ochre villas across the way (AN.i.359)

On the momentous day when Tropic of Cancer first came out, Henry Miller took possession of his new home. The sun was shining, "a light wind blowing from the east, and the colors running red"(HR.55). He was happy, he wrote to Fraenkel: "Moving in to the Villa Seurat. I am the last man alive." And he added: "They say these are bad times. Perhaps they be. But they are good times for me"(HR.56). Miller had come a long way - as had most of the other artists and writers living in the picturesque cobblestone street.

Indeed, the Villa Seurat was almost an artists' quarter in its own right. Antonin Artaud, a friend of Anais Nin, had vacated Miller's studio only a month before. Among the many artists who had lived, or were still living, in that dead end street were Foujita, André Derain, Jean Lurçat and Marcel Gromaire(AN.i.359). David Gascoyne recalls visiting Dali's house on a corner there in 1935 (1). Richard Thoma, an American writer, formerly Samuel Putnam's associate editor on the New Review, lived in one of the other flats at no.18, while Chaim Soutine had the

ground floor studio right under Miller's (ThiH.80). The flat opposite Soutine's, who had moved in when Fraenkel left for Spain, was occupied by Betty Ryan, a young abstract painter, who later became the Booster's secretary. When the Durrells came to Paris in 1937 they stayed in her studio for a month or two. She was travelling in the Balkans at the time. In the flat adjacent to Miller's lived a photographer called Arnaut de Maigret. This concentration of artistic endeavour was apparently no exception in the Villa Seurat impasse. Indeed, as Miller later remembered, in every house in the Villa Seurat one could find a painter, or a writer, or a musician, sculptor, dancer or actor (Remember 163). It was a peaceful and expensive, but also very artistic little street.

Bradbury and McFarlane have underlined the role milieu and life-style played in the generation of modern art (Modernism 193). If one uses the rather elastic term 'milieu' in its most literal sense, one must say that Miller's immediate surroundings, the Villa Seurat, were hardly afflicted by the uproar and the violent ostentation typical of the avant-garde way of life. Despite occasional clowneries enacted by Miller and Perlès, the street was more a part of demi-monde of the arrived artist than that of the teeming and aggressive and buoyant world of the refusés. The Villa Seurat impasse had very little in common with the milieu from which the American had safely emerged under the aegis of Anais Nin. Miller's removal to the Villa Seurat was symptomatic and coincided with a new phase in his life. It coincided with the literary clochard's abdication and the accession of the man of letters, the quietist, and the 'mystic', which we have referred to above. Against this background, Miller had selected a place to live and work which admirably suited him, and in turn his new and quiet surroundings were soon reflected in his art and outlook. Cancer had been "a book of cannibalism and sadism" (AN.ii.51), full of a lumpenproletarian robustness and powerful immediacy, which qualities, however, were lost as the years went by. Looking back, Miller later wrote to Lawrence Durrell that "the man you met in the Villa Seurat was a kind of a monster, in a way, in that he was in the process of transformation. He had become partially civilized, so to speak" (AO.28). He had been domesticated. Fraenkel wrote to Miller: "You are going soft, my boy, warm, affectionate, philosophical - you are



"La Belle Aurore"

consorting too much with those Chinese philosophers"(Hamlet 298). The Villa Seurat was peaceful and expensive and creative, a Chinese street, Miller might have said, and therefore for him a most apposite milieu as well.

If one extends somewhat the definition of 'milieu', one's attention turns to the other habitués of the Villa Seurat. Their accommodation greatly varied in comfort and style. Some were fairly affluent, like Fraenkel and Durrell and Anais Nin, some were extremely poor. While Anais Nin was able to indulge in romantic gestures such as renting the houseboat La Belle Aurore which was moored near the Pont Royal, a fair number of the Miller set was still living in squalid conditions appropriate to the atmosphere of his first Tropic. The Impasse de Rouet was about five minutes away from the Villa Seurat. Perlès had a "rat-hole" of a room there. Two flights below him in the same miserable hotel lived David Edgar, and, after leaving his room at the Hotel des Terrasses, which establishment at one time housed Raymond Queneau, Brassai, Tihanyi, Robert Desnos and Henri Michaux, Hans Reichel too had rented a small studio on the sunny side of the courtyard(2). Over in the Latin Quarter David Gascoyne lived in a tiny attic room in the rue de la Bûcherie in the house of E.E.Cummings. Conrad Moricand, the starving astrologer dandy, had a tiny room in the Hotel Mondial in the rue Noter-Dame-de-Lorette in Montmartre, while Brassai the photographer still lived in the rue de la Glacière, in his "strange domicile", where he used his toilet as a dark room (thus his friend Roger Klein) (3). Jacques and Roger Klein, two French writers who drifted in and out of this circle lived in the rue des Artistes (AN.ii.83).

If we extend the term 'milieu' yet again, and if we draw a circle with the Villa Seurat as the most southerly point and Moricand's hotel as the most northern, this circle would encompass not only all of the above addresses, but also an area which included much of Montmartre, the Left Bank, Montparnasse, the Latin Quarter, the Luxembourg Gardens, St.Germain-des-Prés and so on. Here were located the meeting points of artists and writers, the cafés, bistros, bookshops, cabarets, publishers, art galleries, museums, theatres, cinemas, and bars, the streets and boulevards. It was the very soil from which much

of modern art flowered, and in the section following this one, entitled "Aspects of Paris 1934-1939: the Villa Seurat Perspective", Miller and his friends will be discussed in their relation to other artists and writers and literary movements, to the more concrete manifestations of the Parisian myth, those "dozens of special milieux" (DLB.xiii) which constituted their wider socio-cultural context. At this stage it is important to see that the circle mentioned above measured less than five miles in diameter, and this meant that almost all of Miller's friends and associates lived not only within robust walking distance of each other, a fact that was probably of some importance for someone whose always maintained: "I believe in nothing except what is active, immediate and personal" (Alf Letter 9f), but also that they would be likely to meet casually, or to expect to meet each other, in well-known regular rendez-vous. Intensive personal contact and physical proximity are of course no absolute prerequisites for the formation of a literary group or movement, and there are examples to show that coteries are often seen as such rather from the outside and/or hindsightedly. The chief protagonists of a circle which succeeded in capturing the imagination of a whole literary decade, for instance, the "New Signatures" group, W.H.Auden, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice "were never in one room together at any time throughout the 1930s"(MWW.298). But a congenial topography certainly facilitates communication, the exchange of stimuli and the development of friendships, and though in the late 1930s Durrell was in Paris for no more than two or three months at a time, the fact that when in Paris he lived in the same house as Miller or just around the corner did add significantly to the sense of group cohesion and solidarity....

Notes

1. Labrys.v.60; ThiH.80.
2. FMHR.39,41.
3. FMHR.39; BrPic.65.

II. The Villa Seurat Group : Views from the Inside and from the Outside.

In the 1947 Remember to Remember, Henry Miller reminisced about the wonderful Villa Seurat days, describing his happy life there, offering glimpses of his friendships with Perlès and Reichel and Durrell and David Edgar. Towards the end of the book he remarked how funny and nonsensical he found all those critics, humourless Englishmen to be sure, who conceived of something they called the "Villa Seurat group" (Remember 198f). In his days, Miller suggested, there was no Villa Seurat group, or rather, if there was, it was installed in one of the houses on the other side of the street, where a foreign woman, one Madame Kalf, played the patroness for many of the intellectual bores Paris had to offer(ibid.199f). Miller's insistence that he and his friends were no 'group', that they did not regard themselves as a literary community, seems to reduce the 'Villa Seurat group' hypothesis to a torso by removing a capital factor, the contemporary sense of belonging to a group, the group-consciousness.

Miller's disavowal, as expressed in Remember to Remember, was, in fact, subtly contradicted by a directly preceding passage. There he asserted that strangers often had great difficulties in following the discussions in his studio, for he and his friends had developed a language as cabbalistic and as refined as that of any natural scientist (Remember 198). It is also called into doubt by a number of comments by Villa Seurat associates themselves.

Anais Nin, as we have seen, noted in the summer of 1935: "I am the young mother of the group"(AN.ii.51). Later both she and Miller and Durrell spoke of Villa Seurat musketeers. Miller himself coined the epithet "the burlesque trinity". Fraenkel took pride in regarding as pupils the other members of the circle (Death.i.1.61f). And when Miller spoke made his plea for Alfred Perlès in What Are You Going to do About Alf? he persistently spoke in the first person plural, indicating that he and his friend were thinking and working along similar routes: "we are creating a literature about ourselves, about our happy life of shame"(Alf Letter 10). He thus anticipated the group

consciousness later manifest in the Booster editorials. "Remember, we are boosters first and foremost!", he jestingly admonished Durrell in the autumn of 1937(Corr.115).

Still, like Miller, most of his friends were reluctant to admit that they belonged to a group. They were also reluctant to confess in public that the notion even appealed to them. About a year before the Booster was launched Durrell wrote to Miller from Corfu:

> I wish I could be in a MOVEMENT. Always wanted to be. So far I've never managed to honestly become anything more than an ardent Durrealist. I've quarrelled with almost every writer I've met so far of my age, and now I see my contemporaries starting nice little papers and forming clubs and things. It makes me furious. (Corr.24)

Only some months before he had written almost the same to Miller: "I've always wanted to be in a movement of some kind, but I've never found the kind of writing and people I could whole-heartedly back" (Corr.13). Diametrically opposed to this desire, however, was the myth, which I have mentioned above, the romantic doctrine of the artist's essential and necessary loneliness. In theory, the idea of operating in a group was almost unanimously rejected; in practice, as we shall see, "manifestations of group cohesion and solidarity" proliferated (Modernism 193). In theory, the individual artist worked alone in an intrinsically hostile environment; in practice, the Villa Seurat cul-de-sac was a milieu congenially filled with like-minded people, the house at no.18 bustling with friends and buzzing "with a common debate"(Modernism 200).

An emphatically individualist aesthetic stood against group action. Miller repeated over and over again: "When a man is truly creative he works single-handed and wants no help" - but not one of his books was submitted to the Obelisk Press without passing through the helping and critical hands of his friends. Miller said: "Isolation is the index of profundity"(1) - but in Paris, in the latter part of the decade, he was hardly ever 'isolated', never alone. Still, no matter how much one might be integrated in a complex network of mutual assistance and common discussion, to admit openly and without irony that one aimed to achieve one's objectives in a collective effort, that one needed the

company, encouragement and help of associates, that art without a public was not really art and that in much avant-garde art the public must necessarily be an coterie of initiates, that there were times when one's self was simply not enough, all this ran counter to the projections Miller and Durrell and Perlès usually conjured up for themselves.

We have already pointed out how The Black Book's dramatic account of an anguished 'escape' to Greece (with strong autobiographical emphases) failed to square with reality, how Durrell was not at all alone and how his vivacious family and young wife accompanied him in his exile. The same ambivalence permeated much of the Villa Seurat's work. Both Miller's aversion to the epithet 'Villa Seurat group' and Durrell's The Black Book are ruled by the same fixed idea: "The fear of standing alone is the evidence that the faith is weak"(CosE.180). This article of faith, however questionable its ring after it has been seen in the perspective of biographical realities, determined the circle's attitude to all collective activity. Self-consciously in opposition to a widely held belief that the terrible socio-political developments of the time required a collective response, the more radical of Villa Seurat habitués believed that to participate in movements of any sort, to belong to organisations of any denomination, to acknowledge the zoon politikon, even to express one's belief in humanity, were certain signs of individual weakness, personal insufficiency. And as far as literary groups were concerned, Miller's derisive remarks on Unit One, a group of English artists ("pygmies") in "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" are characteristic, as were his strictures on Breton's surrealism itself:

> ...it is a mistake to speak about Surrealism. There is no such thing: there are only Surrealists. They have existed in the past and they will exist in the future. The desire to posit an ism, to isolate the germ and cultivate it, is a bad sign. It means impotency. It is on par with that impotency which makes of a man a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Mohammedan. A man who is full of God is outside the faith. (CosE.177)

In short, 'movement' or 'group' or 'literary clique' or 'coterie' signalled for Miller, as it did for Durrell and the others, a relinquishing of the principle of the individual's absolute primacy, which in

turn was not only a constituent factor of their art, but, as we have seen, the basis of their life as expatriates, exiles who had found fulfillment outside the limits of their original social context. 'Group' for them meant limitation rather than expansion, impotence rather than strength, shallowness rather than profundity. Only weak men and mediocre artists banded together in 'groups' and 'cliques'. Of course, when Miller and his friends collaborated this did not come under the 'group' heading. They were genuine, unadulterated individuals, and, if questioned, they would have said that activities involving 'truly creative' individuals were per se of a different quality, did not involve a surrendering of individual properties and actually left the participants unchanged...

Naive English critics, "in their polite, asinine way", as Miller was wont to say (CosE.157), had some difficulties in distinguishing between a band of impotent "pygmies" on the one hand, and on the other, a group of shining and 'truly creative' individuals (a group which was not really a group anyway). For these critics (as for us) the notion of 'literary group' had less to do with whether those taking part were good poets or not, whether or not they "banded together" because they needed the corset of an -ism, than with the fact that a number of writers were brought and held together by certain common concerns, common beliefs, common themes and attitudes, the expression of which might take the shape of a manifesto, of an anthology, of a little magazine, or some other form of public display, performance or happening.

In these terms the Villa Seurat was perceived from the outside as a "literary group". Writing in 1939, George Orwell discerned in Paris around Henry Miller an association of "writers of approximately the same tendency...almost amounting to a school"(CE.i.577). He named Lawrence Durrell and Michael Fraenkel. In the opinion of Brian Corbett of the T'ien Hsia Monthly Fraenkel "may be considered as the philosophical spokesman for that group of writers which includes Lawrence Durrell, whose prose-poem, The Black Book, was recently reviewed in this journal" (T'ien Hsia.x.2.197). In an article about Winter of Artifice in late 1939, Emily Hahn, who was the said reviewer of The Black Book noted about the publishers who had issued not only Anais

Nin's book and that of Durrell but also Henry Miller's work: "The Obelisk Press may yet be responsible for creating a literary clique, much as Mr.Durrell fears such an eventuality". She added: "If it is formed, it will be better than most cliques anyway"(2). Several years later, Nicholas Moore noted that the similarity between the writings of Miller and Perlès and Durrell was "a similarity not so much of a conscious group, but such a similarity as it is natural to find among friends"(NMHM.23f). Another acquaintance of the day, Dylan Thomas, was very interested, according to Durrell, in "the Paris Group, as he called it"(Encounter.ix.6.56). The poet Henry Treece, author of one the earliest books on Dylan Thomas, discerned in the Villa Seurat a part of a broad Romantic revival: "For instance, there was the Paris Movement (though it never gave itself such a name) of Perlès, Henry Miller and Anais Nin" (HISA.175).

It is true that a number of these statements were published months and even years after the party in Paris had ended, after the Villa Seurat ménage had dispersed. Orwell's "Inside the Whale", for instance, appeared in 1940, while the T'ien Hsia Monthly commentaries from Shanghai tended to be somewhat out of date anyway. Still, most of these remarks were less of an overtly retrospective nature than comments on a contemporary phenomenon. Orwell, who actually visited Miller in 1936, had been writing continuously about him and his friends since 1935. The notion of a Villa Seurat group was not, in other words, a later reading. The following reaction to the Booster also shows this. Referring to Henry Miller, a reviewer in the New English Weekly introduced his short article of January 1939 (when the title had already been changed to Delta for over nine months) with the words: "The most eminent of the Boosters needs no boosting" (NEW.xiv.14.210). Plainly the group title "the Boosters" (which term will, in fact, be used as an alternative to "the Villa Seurat group" of the years 1937-39) needed little explanation. But even if, for the moment, one disregards the response to the Booster, it seems difficult to deny that quite a number of outside observers felt that the Villa Seurat stood for something more than just Henry Miller(3). And what is more, the Villa Seurat residents themselves were aware of their reputation. "The Villa Seurat was becoming as legendary as Camelot in medieval Europe", said Miller's biographer Jay Martin, adding: "at least those

who lived or congregated there thought so" (Martin 316). Lawrence Durrell, at any rate, understood from the beginning and from a distance, what Martin called "the collaborative spirit of the Villa Seurat" (Martin 316). The following chapter will be concerned with this "collaborative spirit" in Miller's Villa Seurat studio.

Notes

1. CosE.180; 171.
2. T'ien Hsia ix.4.438. She was probably referring to Durrell's letter to the April 1939 issue of Poetry London, which will be discussed in our chapters on Durrell's poetry Deltas.
3. The Villa Seurat cooperative antedated Durrell's arrival, as can be seen in his own words to Miller which said that the "Villa Seurat I always imagine as an immense factory, rather like the Walt Disney studio, with you in the centre, surrounded by a few hundred active typewriters all making copies of the Hamlet essay"(Corr.32).

III. Manifestations of Group Cohesion and Solidarity

Had Miller and Perlès never gained control of the Booster, had they never poured their burlesque energies into the brittle and ordinary skin of the American Country Club newssheet, the Villa Seurat's particular esprit de corps would still have been manifest. In the novels and poems and essays of those involved there existed affinities in content, in ideas, in language and in style, which suggest a long-term process of influence and cross-inspiration that went well beyond the limited bounds of the Booster. The inner circle around Miller had collaborated intensely long before 1937. Furthermore, mutual assistance and joint operations in the Booster years exceeded the activities involved in producing the magazine itself. Although its editorials, placards and advertisements in other little magazines were a touchstone of the Villa Seurat's self-perception in the years 1937 to 1939, the Booster/Delta venture was no sine qua non for the Villa Seurat set.

Undoubtedly, what in the end distinguishes one literary group from another are the works themselves, the extent to which they reflect similar ideas, similar methods and directions. A number of these aesthetico-philosophical correspondences between Miller and the Villa Seurat inner circle have been mentioned already. Though certain differences in outlook also existed, though disagreements about the nature of art were at times so vehement that they made for anything but 'group cohesion', there is little doubt that generally the similarities outweighed the differences. This holds true especially when the circle is examined against the literary world of the period. This or that member of the circle insisting on this or that singular feature in his work occasionally reminds one of a child who cannnot easily see how much he resembles his brothers and sisters. We have already referred to Miller's remark that they had developed a most private idiom, a fact that Durrell singled out when he tried to explain why the Booster seemed incomprehensible to many people he had spoken to in London:

...you have created such a bubble around yourself there in Villa Seurat, talk such a personal and strange language that you cannot even conceive of the bewilderment of people who sit outside in London, for example, and listen. (Corr.119)

Indeed, in many respects they were a closed coterie, eccentric and strange to the outsider, a microcosm surrounded by an impenetrable barrier. Writing in 1943 Nicholas Moore denied that the members of the Villa Seurat were indistinguishable from one another, but he had to admit that "they do have a certain background in common, a background of belief, and a background of conception"(NMHM.24). And this background set them apart from other writers of the time and at the same time welded them together in the minds of outside observers. Correspondences in philosophical, aesthetic and political attitudes, however, were only one aspect of the 'group' formula, a superstructure, as it were, raised above the complex minglings of these various individuals in Paris in the latter half of the 1930s, individuals who were self-willed and jealous of their independence. In the sections which follow we will have many occasions to return to questions of outlook and their aesthetic implications. Of equal importance, however, were the "manifestations of group cohesion" of a more material, tangible kind. In Tropic of Cancer Miller said: "Ideas have to be wedded to action" (Cancer 243), and previous chapters have already described some of the ways in which the Villa Seurat denizens wedded action to their sense of kinship, how they helped each other and not only with ideas or advice. I have mentioned how Perlès picked up Miller off the street, clothed and fed him, how Anais Nin gave him money and gifts, how Fraenkel put him up for a month or so, often invited him to a restaurant in order to be able to continue their 'death festival' talks. For over two months Nancy and Lawrence Durrell gave the impoverished David Gascoyne a meal nearly every day (Labrys.v.60). Six months before actually meeting Miller for the first time, Durrell offered to help out with money: "Are you in low financial straits? Let me just pay the workmen and buy the engine and maybe I'll have a few pounds to offer at the shrine of St. Valentine" (Valentine was Miller's middle name) (Corr.70). Again, in February 1937, Durrell invited both Miller and Perlès to Corfu, offering to put them up, adding generously: "there would be NO EXPENSES. The rent of the house is free, and I do all the catering" (Corr.67). Miller too helped where he could, paying

Moricand to do horoscopes for numerous of his friends. The astrologer was in dire straits, and these commissions (sometimes, to Moricand's astonishment, Miller would present the astrologically relevant information of famous artists, philosophers, etc) helped keep him alive: "More than once Moricand pressed him for an introduction to these strange creatures who, in the light of his astrological findings, should have been a Landru, a Rasputin, or a Da Vinci"(MFHM.150)

No less imaginative, though perhaps not as materially effective, was Miller's What Are You Going to Do About Alf?. In a way reminiscent of the efforts of Pound, Aldington and others to free Eliot from having to work at Lloyds Bank in London, Miller tried to persuade his readers that Alf, "a young man of genius who's been rotting away here in Paris for the last twelve years"(Alf Letter 6), needed just a little money to live for six months in Ibiza in order to complete his masterwork Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur. "Remember, we are not asking for a loan - we are asking for alms"(Alf Letter 24). Miller "naturally" pocketed the handful of donations which trickled in, contributions which Perlès heard of "only much later - when Henry was in one of his confessional moods"(MFHM.163), but the idea of finding a place to stay for Perlès and later also for Moricand, where they "could live dirt cheap" somewhere in the Mediterranean came up more than once (Corr.139).

The printing of What Are You Going to Do About Alf? at any rate was financed by Anais Nin's cousin (and occasional lover), the astrological enthusiast Eduardo Sanchez, and by Michael Fraenkel, "our much-abused friend of the period", as Perlès recalled in an epilogue to a later reprint of the "Alf Letter", adding in parentheses "abused by his friends"(Alf Letter np.). Paying for publishing costs was a more specifically artistic way of material aid, implying, as it did when Anais Nin put up the six hundred dollars for Tropic of Cancer, the willingness to wager a large sum on one's literary convictions. In 1935 Anais Nin thought of buying a printing press and setting up a private publishing company: "Fred baptized the press Siana, reversing the spelling of my name" (AN.ii.46). This idea developed into the Siana Series, a number of books edited by Miller, financed by Anais Nin and distributed by the Obelisk Press. "Miller intended to publish a book by each member of his inner circle"(Martin 315). His own Aller

Retour New York was "Siana Series No 1". Richard Thoma's Tragedy in Blue was the second number, followed by Anais Nin's House of Incest (Martin 315).

Another rather similar joint publishing venture, which involved Anais Nin, Henry Miller, Lawrence and Nancy Durrell, as well as Jack Kahane, was the Villa Seurat Series. Launched by Miller in the best of the Booster days, the series was an enterprise somewhat more sober than the magazine. Durrell called the series "our Big Bertha" (Corr.119). Jack Kahane, who claimed to have founded this series, "which I confidently believe will have an important part in the literary history of our time"(Kahane 268f), was in fact only responsible for distribution, as Nancy Durrell guaranteed the costs of printing the first three works. These were The Black Book, Max and the White Phagocytes and Winter of Artifice. The Villa Seurat Series collapsed when Nancy Durrell's money ran out (Martin 330).

Throughout the decade a good deal of time and energy was directed at finding publishing outlets, for oneself and one's friends. The Booster, a trouvaille of Alfred Perlès, must be seen in this light. In the early days Miller and Perlès sometimes used the other's name or material in order to get into print. Miller's "Rue Lourmel in the Fog", "Paris in ut mineur", "Prismatoidal Scenery" and a number of other articles appeared under the Austrian's name in the Sunday edition of the Chicago Herald Tribune. The Tribune was closed to Miller, who was not a staff writer (Martin 227). Miller, often forced to ghost write the most ludicrous of topics, incidentally, also improved, at times even composed, some of the articles of Wambly Bald. Bald, the disreputable Van Norden of Tropic of Cancer, was the paper's gossip columnist and Miller was probably the author of a sketch appearing on October 14th 1931, the "first published notice of Miller" (DLB.16f).

They helped one another in contacting and persuading publishers to publish them. They advertised their friends. In April 1934 Anais Nin travelled to London, lobbying for Tropic of Cancer and Black Spring and the Lawrence fragment (AN.i.331). From Spring 1937 on Durrell and Miller discussed in their correspondence a number of possible publicity campaigns against the suppression of Cancer. Miller wanted to issue

a selection from the enthusiastic letters he had received (as well as letters he would have liked to have received), Durrell wrote to various prominent authors for contributions to what he wanted to call "The Banned Book", and some, like George Bernard Shaw responded (though not too favourably). In the end, however, only a four page pamphlet entitled "Opinions of This Writer's Work" was published by Miller in 1938 (Martin 317). In England in 1937 Durrell continued campaigning for his friend, discussing the possibilities of publishing Miller's work with the luminaries of the London publishing world including T.S.Eliot (Corr.116ff). Similarly, when some years before Maurice Dekrobra asked Miller for something to publish, the latter declined but suggested that a friend of his, a real genius, might possibly be persuaded to supply a manuscript. That was how Perlès found a publisher for Sentiments Limitrophes - finally (HMGN.18). And when Perlès was asked by an austerely Catholic publisher, who had just written a whining book about peace on earth, whether he knew of a translator, the Austrian suggested his friend Henry Miller. Miller was paid 5000 francs for this job (HMGN.18f). More important, however, was Miller's help with publishing The Black Book. Durrell had sent the book to Paris in March 1937; Miller was thrilled by the book, recognising immediately that only someone like Kahane or Fraenkel would print it: "No English or American publisher would dare print it"(Corr.72). Laboriously typing out (with the help of Anais Nin) three copies of Durrell's original typescript for Eliot, Herbert Read and Kahane, Miller insisted that Durrell must not surrender his artistic integrity to Faber and Faber, who wanted to expurgate certain passages and then print The Black Book. "Don't, my good Durrell, take the schizophrenic route" (Corr.107), said Miller. Durrell turned down Faber's lucrative offer, while Miller pressed his own negotiations with Kahane, whom he later called "the only man in Christendom who had the guts to take a chance on dubious works of genius" (Moore 97).

Publication and distribution of major works like The Black Book or Winter of Artifice were, however, only one aspect of the great struggle for literary fame, an all too rare broadside from "our Big Bertha". Almost as important, especially since many of their books were quickly banned in England and America, were the smaller skirmishes, the tenacious efforts to place articles and excerpts in

literary journals and little magazines. Once again Miller and his friends helped each other where they could. In a letter of November 15th 1936, for example, Miller informed Durrell that he had made copies of his Hamlet essay, sent them on to "Philip Mairet, editor of the New English Weekly, with suggestion that he get in touch with you and find out if you would like to have it printed in his sheet" (Corr.29). The New English Weekly published "The Prince and Hamlet" on January 14th 1937. Miller, however, had also written to Eliot about the article, to James Laughlin of New Directions, to the Southern Review, to a French magazine called Orbes, to Artur Lundkvist of the Swedish Caravan, to the T'ien Hsia Monthly, and probably to others as well.

In the years before the war, campaigning such as this led to a remarkable increase in the number of articles and short stories published; more specifically it lead to various concentrated inroads by the Villa Seurat writers into a number of journals and little magazines. An example: the Shanghai T'ien Hsia Monthly, which first caught Miller's attention with an essay by John C.H. Wu entitled "Shakespeare as a Taoist", printed in November 1937 Miller's "The Tree of Life and Death" (Corr.47). Over the next two years, this well-produced, scholarly journal "under the auspices of the Sun Yat-sen Institute for the Advancement of Culture and Education", printed no less than three excerpts from Fraenkel's "Personal Experience of Alfred Kromburg"; his "Active Negation as a Revolutionary Solvent"; Miller's "Tribute to Blaise Cendrars" and "Raimu"; "On Goethe" and "Rainer Maria Rilke" by Alfred Perlès; Durrell's "Prospero's Isle"; as well as reviews of The Black Book, Winter of Artifice and other Villa Seurat publications.

In the same manner, once Miller's "Creative Death" was issued in the London Purpose in 1938, the pages of that journal opened to his friends as well, with Durrell contributing some poems, Anais Nin a study of Otto Rank entitled "Creative Principle in Analysis", Perlès his Goethe Letter (again) and Fraenkel the above mentioned "Lawrence and the Death Process". The April-June issue of 1939, in fact, presented not only a review of The Black Book by the famous Elizabeth Bowen, but also three essays by Durrell, Perlès and Conrad Moricand. Similarly, hardly a single pre-war issue of the Woodstock Phoenix

appeared without a contribution from Miller's inner circle of friends; and Nicholas Moore's Seven, eight numbers of which appeared until it ceased publication in 1940, was from the outset (among other things) a British platform for the Villa Seurat.

To say that these were impressive inroads into the publishing world may be exaggerated. Nevertheless, perhaps in the light of this kind of concentrated emergence from obscurity, the "asinine" English critics will be more easily forgiven for believing that the Villa Seurat formed a 'group'. Furthermore, an attentive reader of little magazines might have noticed an unusual focus on certain themes, evident for instance in the repeated Lawrence interpretations by the members of the circle, in Perlès' article on Hölderlin, which was "inspired by David Gascoyne's recent book, Hölderlin's Madness" (Purpose.xi. 2.101), or in the fact that Erich Gutkind's The Absolute Collective was reviewed almost simultaneously both by Henry Miller for the Criterion and by Michael Fraenkel for the Phoenix.

Moreover, the very subject matter of a contribution was not seldom the work of another member of the circle. David Gascoyne, for example, retorted with a poem on "The Other Larry", when Durrell sent a somewhat cutting poem about Gascoyne's "Journal" to the New English Weekly. Usually, however, as the quotations from the Alf Letter show, comments on close acquaintances were in less of a critical tone. Miller was particularly adept at eulogistic portraiture. Almost all of his artist friends were at point or another subjected to his 'boosting' spirit. "The Cosmological Eye", a short essay on Hans Reichel, was a contribution to Transition. In 1933 he composed his portrait of Brassai called "The Eye of Paris", first published in Globe (Minneapolis), reprinted, however, not only in the Booster, but in Max and the White Phagocytes and The Wisdom of the Heart. He also praised Anais Nin in "Un Etre Etoilique" which Eliot printed in the Criterion. But Miller was not the only eulogist of the group. In "Fathers, Daughters and Lovers", Perlès reviewed for Purpose most favorably Anais Nin's Winter of Artifice. Raymond Queneau contributed "un chaleureux article" about Cancer and Black Spring in the eminent Nouvelle Revue Francaise (HMGN 215). More than a year before Perlès gained control over the Booster he reviewed in what was still an amateurishly run Country Club paper

Miller's Black Spring (Shifreen 78). Durrell, too, made his contribution, celebrating in the New English Weekly Miller's Max and the White Phagocytes. As a "Booster Letter" proclaimed in 1937: "We like to boost, and of course to begin with we are going to boost ourselves" (IntHML.iv.21).

Hyperbolic mutual praise, in short, writing about one another in most favourable terms, was a mark of this circle, evident in the various prefatory writings as well, in Anais Nin's introduction to Tropic of Cancer, for instance, or Miller's letter which prefaces Fraenkel's Bastard Death. One regrets that certain of Miller's projects in this field, the plan to write ten to twelve stories about his Villa Seurat friends, to be entitled Some Pleasant Monsters (later Astrological Effigies) were never realised.

"You have genius, there's no doubt about it. You are a genius. And I don't say that easily" (Corr.88). Such overwhelming praise, whether in public or in private, naturally also made for group cohesion, as it not only linked the subject and object of praise closer together (there were not many who considered Durrell a genius), but encouraged new work in the group's general direction as well (this was the path to follow). There are many examples of the elaborate exchange of patronage, comfort and encouragement between Miller and the inner circle of friends. Here is another. Miller wrote to Count Keyserling in April 1936 :"I am trying to get Moricand to do another book of portraits which would include your own, Gandhi's, Hitler, Krishnamurti, Elie Faure, Proust, Joyce, Spengler, Picasso and a few others" (IntHML.v.5). This was the collaborative spirit of the Villa Seurat at work.

Helping one another with gifts, money or housing, finding or even creating new publishing outlets, praising one's friends real (or imagined) artistic virtues, encouraging the other to write or paint, these forms of cooperation, if viewed from a strictly literary standpoint, were of an indirect nature. Still, the borderline between indirect and direct literary collaboration is never easy to define; the myth of the solitary artist is precisely that, a fairy tale.

Should one count as examples of literary collaboration those works that were composed during a period when the group not only discussed most intensively certain common subjects but even read and then debated the same books at the same time, books such as Nijinsky's Diary? "We're re-reading Rank's Trauma of Birth", Anais Nin noted in her diary in November 1937, a month or so before the last Booster was issued, with the title: "The Air-Conditioned Womb Number". Was Miller's Scenario, which evolved from the idea of writing "a scenario around House of Incest" (AN.ii.244), and which was a project that he and Anais Nin had begun together, strictly speaking his own work or not? According to Anais Nin, her friend's essay on Reichel was the result of their visit to his atelier, after which occasion she synthesised Miller's 'wild talk' about the painter (AN.ii.163). Was "The Cosmological Eye" consequently a joint venture or not? More often than not, no simple answer is forthcoming.

The "Anonymous" pamphlet, written in 1930 by Lowenfels and Fraenkel and reprinted in The Day Face and the Night Face collection in 1947, may safely be called a joint venture. The same applies to "Three Essays in Weather Counterpoint", by the three members of the Death School, a collection Fraenkel still wanted to publish as late as 1936 (MFBD.np.). The Hamlet correspondence has been mentioned before. Indeed, the letter as a flexible literary form which also implied a counterpart was very popular in Miller's circle, as the examples of Aller Retour New York or Aller Sans Retour Londres or Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere show.

Far less in earnest than the Hamlet exchange, and projected as a brief exercise in shock tactics was the comical sabotage Henry Miller and Fred Perlès worked on Samuel Putnam's New Review in 1931. Foolishly, Putnam, off on a summer holiday in America, entrusted them with seeing through the press the autumn number of his literary journal. Miller and Perlès, however, so thoroughly rearranged it with their own anarchistic gusto that the printers grew suspicious. It was too late to change that issue, however, which was now missing a long article on Jolas' "Revolution of the Word" as well as a story by Robert McAlmon, but included work by Miller and a poem by one Ida Graves. Perlès: "I was no great expert on poetry and Ida's poem may not have been so

good, but she had marvellous breasts and I knew something about breasts"(MFHM.34). What Putnam did succeed in suppressing was the gratis supplement in French and in English they had decided to please the subscribers with:

> Henry and I had written a joint manifesto called The New Instinctivism, which we were going to launch upon an unsuspecting world. It was a wild, exuberant, anarchic pamphlet written not so much on the lines of preceding manifestos (Dadaism, Surrealism, etc.) but rather a parody. We also promised our readers the imminent publication of the New Instinctivist Bible. Apart from the beginning of the Hamlet correspondence, the New Instinctivism is the only piece Henry and I collaborated on; we had enormous fun with it. (MFHM.34)

This was almost the only piece Miller and Perlès collaborated on - publicly. Less immediately apparent as collaborative work, though identified as such in other sources, were those literary undertakings which appeared under the name of one writer, but were in part at least the result of mutual efforts. We have remarked on the role of Fraenkel in the genesis of Tropic of Cancer. Anais Nin, too, helped Miller with the book, as did Alfred Perlès (AiP.265). All the while the figure of the solitary artist strutted through the pages of Cancer. The collaboration on Cancer was by no means a unique instance. Fraenkel recalled nostalgically "those memorable evenings we spent together in the Villa Seurat, proofreading Bastard Death"(Hamlet 303). From late 1937 on, as mentioned, Miller edited the Villa Seurat Series, which, as George Wickes put it, was "to be a major preoccupation and a thorn in Miller's flesh for the rest of his stay in Paris"(Corr.114). In June 1938 he reported to Corfu, that he had just reread The Black Book for the sixth time and that it was now off to the printers (Corr.124). Anais Nin's 1938/39 letters to Durrell show that the Englishman had promised to comment extensively on the manuscript of Winter of Artifice, and that she and Miller, who were also occupied with proofreading Tropic of Capricorn, had checked her book in detail:

> I now see what a lot of lousy writing I did, and I am really sorry. But it is really very much improved now, Goetfried let nothing pass. We used a magnifying glass, and plus Larry's corrections it should be all right now. I am waiting for Larry's set very keenly. (Mosaic. xi.H.2.46)

The above, admittedly somewhat schematic, listing of "manifestations of group cohesion and solidarity" is not comprehensive, conspicuously leaving aside for example, the Booster/Delta enterprise, leaving aside, for the moment, stylistic influences of the writers on one another. Still, the examples provided seem to give some substance to the idea that the term 'Villa Seurat group' is more than a figment in the mind of some half-witted English critic. The term signifies what was an active and highly interactive artistic community. It also denotes a lively group of friends. As a matter of fact, this especial element, friendship and mutual respect, both vital factors in the 'cohesion' of any community, characterised the personal relationships between most (but not all) members of Miller's group. Similar interests and goals and ways of thinking, common experiences and activities, these naturally deepen the sense of belonging together. Indeed, without some basic sympathy even the strongest of objective artistic affinities will prove fruitless for a group in the end. But there was much of this basic sympathy and mutual respect in the Villa Seurat. Lawrence Durrell's arrival in Paris in August 1937 is very much a case in point.

Alfred Perlès has described how the young Englishman, whom none of Miller's set had ever met before, "disembarked in the Villa Seurat, crashed through the halo, and was instantly admitted to the inner circle, where he has remained ever since"(MFHM.133). The rapport between Miller and Durrell was immediate, as Perlès discovered when he joined them: "Both Henry and Larry were in high spirits. They seemed to have recognized each other immediately as 'old souls' - people of the same atavism who have everything in common with each other" (MFHM.167). Durrell's presence, continued Perlès, gave the circle a fresh impetus (like Dali's joining the flagging surrealist group in the late 1920s), "his friendship instilled a new quality in Miller's already rich inner life" (MFHM.174). Anais Nin, too, felt an instant harmony with Durrell, a sparkling understanding, which can only be described as a very intense kind of friendship, a form of love(1). And Fred Perlès confided to Henry Miller some twenty years later that of all the latter's acquaintances there were only three he ever really befriended, and among them were David Edgar and Lawrence Durrell (RiBS.24f).

HENRY MILLER

Another aspect of the group must be mentioned. From what has been said above, from the introductory chapters which presented Fraenkel, Anais Nin and Perlès in their individual relationship to Henry Miller, it ought to be clear that the Villa Seurat group was Miller's personal achievement and he its undisputed centre. In the Villa Seurat group most activities (but not all) revolved around the Happy Rock, as Miller sometimes called himself. It is true that there did exist some relationships beyond Miller, friendships outside his scope: Perlès and Brassai were friends long before they became acquainted with the American, Moricand was Anais Nin's discovery, while the acquaintance between Durrell and David Gascoyne was independent of Miller. However, the common denominator of the group as such was Henry Miller.

"The activity Henry has created is extraordinary", Anais Nin wrote in the warmth of the Booster autumn: "He lives in a whirlpool, drawing everyone to him" (AN.ii.267). In later years, Miller's role was frequently idealised, a good example of this being Durrell's hyperbole: "I myself always felt rather like Palmer who says that he could not call upon Mr.Blake without first kissing the knob on the door before knocking"(AO.15). This is, of course, exaggeration. Still, there can be little doubt that in these years Miller was the admired centre of a wonderful "circle of enlightened artists, good friends, angelic creatures", people who stimulated and helped each other; and that the five years he spent at the Villa Seurat were the happiest in his life (Martin 326). The world around them was crumbling, the Villa Seurat, however, remained "a kind of warm, sustaining place of mutual encouragement" (Martin 316).

Notes

1. AN.ii.223-237, 268.

IV. The Villa Seurat : "The first real, enduring creation I credit myself with achieving".

In his last Hamlet letter to Michael Fraenkel, written after the Munich Crisis had destroyed the Chinese quiet in the cobblestone cul de sac off the rue de la Tombe-Issoire, Miller sadly explained what the Villa Seurat had come to mean for him: "In anchoring myself here in the Villa Seurat these last four years I was unconsciously identifying a state of inner peace with the place which reflected my aura"(Hamlet 367). The Villa Seurat had not only been a "sanctuary", but also a symbol of an inner condition Miller prided himself on having finally achieved:

> In the past, whatever ties I had were physical or sentimental; I was never tied to possessions, but I had been tied to individuals, to relationships. This time I was tied to something far deeper, to a creation, which I had unwittingly concretized. I was attached to the ambiance of a state of mind which was the first real, enduring creation I credit myself with achieving. The Villa Seurat became identified with all France, with her destiny. You can imagine my anguish. (Hamlet 367)

One can well imagine Miller's anguish as he wrote to his correspondent: "To-day the Villa Seurat no longer exists" (Hamlet 367). In a later chapter we will discuss in detail the Villa Seurat and the Munich Crisis, how that anxious summer ushered in the end of Miller's Parisian life. The point here is that the Villa Seurat did not cease to exist entirely but lived on - as a myth, as a utopian past.

The Villa Seurat years were the most productive in Miller's life, an endless number of projects were hatched, pamphlets and articles published, major works like Tropic of Capricorn written and seen through the press. Furthermore, in every single memoir, all this wonderful literary activity is described as insignificant compared with the good times and the friendship and the laughter. "In those early days the writing man took secondary place", said Miller: "It was the person who counted with us..."(Moore 96). Incongruously in that shadowy age, laughter and fun were the precepts of the day. "What were we up to? Fun. 'It makes fun', Reichel used to say. Everything made fun"(Moore 96).

The Villa Seurat days lent themselves readily to hyperbole and nostalgia. And had the passionate mythographers around Miller treated this period in any other way one would have been more than surprised. In this sunny retrospective the colder aspects are often ignored; the darker tones, tensions, disputes and moments of estrangement are usually omitted, the manifestations of group dispersion neglected. Thus it is only in the primary sources that one finds Miller dangerously overworked, tired and ill, lonely and even suicidal. It is only in letters and diary notes that one finds him confessing to Durrell a deep distrust of all his Paris friends: "I feel I can trust you implicitly - whereas I wouldn't trust Fraenkel et alia who are all supposed to be my most intimate friends"(Corr.85). And in the reminiscences one never finds the Durrells sick of the Montparnasse bustle and dirt, longing for their island in the sun (AN.ii.337). One never reads of Durrell's reserve about Miller's peculiar "impersonality", or of his confiding to Anais Nin that "There is something deeply wrong about his (Miller's) attitude to the world" (AN.iii.7). One never reads what Perlès wrote to his friend in Sentiments Limitrophes: "Tu n'as pas d'amour, et sans amour, tu ne pourras jamais t'élargir"(SL.50). We have spoken of Anais Nin's increasingly sceptical view of Miller's writing, her dislike of the Villa Seurat's "dadaism" and of the Booster (AN.ii.65). I have mentioned how from winter 1938 onward Alfred Perlès sought to free himself of his old attachment to Miller, and I have described the discord, the jealousies and insults which eventually led to Fraenkel's break with Miller. Not everything "made fun", as Reichel used to say, and of the many possible examples we will cite only one more, the bitter ending of David Gascoyne's acquaintance with Anais Nin. After some trivial disagreement, Gascoyne, who had introduced Anais Nin to the work of Pierre Jean Jouve, and even written a poem for her(1), was severely taken to task in her diary, was described as a cold, suffering narcissist. They never spoke to each other again, and in his own diary (which he had earlier given her to read, just as she had showed him a volume of her journal) Gascoyne noted:

I should admire her extreme pig headedness as a sign of passion were it not that one has the suspicion that she has deliberately to force herself to act in this way, out of a taste for the theatrical and the picturesque, such as is evident in the Moorish décor with which she surrounds herself, the 'barbaric' jewellery, the incense-burning, the glass tree, and other exotic stage-properties that she requires in order to convince herself that she is leading an intensely interesting 'inner life'. (Oh, miauou - !) (DG.ii.49)

There are numerous instances of this sort, which speak against the Rabelaisian camaraderie which most retrospective accounts proffer as the Villa Seurat's one and only ambience. Still, as Miller noted in that final Hamlet letter, the Villa Seurat had become more than a comfortable place of residence, more also than the lively group of friends who congregated and collaborated there in his studio. It had become a symbol, especially for Miller, but also for the others, though in varying degree and with occasional disillusioning breaks. It had become for Miller a reflection of the new inner happiness he had found in Paris, a token of his love for France, and thus, even at this early stage, it had come to have about it some of the purity of myth, a purity which could not be tainted by occasional shadows from the daily life. The Villa Seurat was a symbol, both the place and the group. Anais Nin said: "each one of us must be himself plus the symbol, a greater himself"(AN.ii.162). The very same applied both to the quiet street in the 14th arrondissement and to the group itself.

Notes

1. This poem entitled "City of Myth" is not included in Gascoyne's Collected Poems.

C. ASPECTS OF PARIS 1934-1939 : THE VILLA SEURAT PERSPECTIVE.

I. Introduction

In the foregoing section, the Villa Seurat's importance as a symbol was underlined, how it had come to represent for Henry Miller a hard-won inner freedom, how it described for him a sanctuary, a place of peace. "To Henry and his friends no sane spot seemed left in the world, except for the little corner of it called the Villa Seurat" (Martin 316). The tenor of many reminiscences and biographies is often that a chasm yawned between the merry and bright Villa Seurat and a surrounding world gone insane:

> Many artists all over the world were giving up the struggle: some were shouldering guns; others were devoting themselves to the Revolution, while others had been numbed and dazed into inaction. But the Villa Seurat was a kind of warm, sustaining place of mutual encouragement. In 1936 and 1937 its members felt like survivors and looked around strangely at the conflagration which had overtaken their fellows. (Martin 316)

Indeed, the pastel-coloured cul de sac, its quietly stimulating spirit of place, seemed to stand out in more than a physical sense from the grey and squalid surroundings of the fourteenth arrondissement. It appeared precisely a metaphor for that special outlook which the tenant of the first floor flat at no.18 promulgated with such ardour in the years before the war, a radical equanimity in the face of the political disarray of the European world around him.

In a fascinating study of the Left Bank, a book subtitled Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War, Herbert Lottman has noted in one of the handful of paragraphs dealing with Anglo-Americans in Paris, that like most of his countrymen, Miller "remained sheltered from the commotion of France in crisis". The author of Tropic of Cancer, Lottman said, was "unconcerned by the

deepening European crisis at the end of the 1930s". Miller and his friends "lived in a little world of their own", and they were not in touch with what was happening beyond the Villa Seurat perimeter (WiP.42f).

There is some truth to this view. Still, it is one-sided, to say the least. Had there been no more to the Villa Seurat's dealings, literary and otherwise, with the world outside, George Orwell would hardly have bothered to describe how he saw Miller so often and so thoroughly as he did. A label like "proponent of poetic isolation" or "denizen of an ivory tower" or simply "escapist" would have sufficed. But Orwell knew that this was not enough. We will return to discuss his analyses of Miller as they changed over the years in a later chapter. Orwell did point out that the appearance of Cancer, a book "about American deadbeats cadging drinks in the Latin Quarter" seemed incongruous at a time when Mussolini was invading Ethiopia and "Hitler's concentration camps were already bulging", and that on the face of it "a novelist who simply disregards the major public events of the moment is generally either a footler or a plain idiot" (CE.i.542). Nevertheless, it was plain, said Orwell that Cancer was a most remarkable book, and he proposed a paradox to explain why. Miller was indifferent to the fate of the world, suggested Orwell, yet he was also astonishingly aware of what was going on. He was sheltered, safely inside the whale, said Orwell, but in "his case the whale happens to be transparent" (CE.i.573). Similarly, according to an eminent contemporary critic, Desmond Hawkins, the "true protagonist" of Durrell's The Black Book, the stage of which was a shabby London hotel, was "not the narrator or any of the other characters, but the zeitgeist itself" (Criterion.xviii.71.316). Almost a year before he first met Miller in the summer of 1937, David Gascoyne reviewed Black Spring and Tropic of Cancer for a London magazine called Comment. In his article, the young surrealist poet, who was about to join the Communist Party, presented his evaluation in two parts, parts which seem to contradict each other. On the one hand Miller's outlook, his fatalism, was predictably criticised as "born of ignorance of historical cause and effect and of blindness to social and economic realities". On the other hand his books were praised as "the products of a life spent at the heart of the modern world, in Paris and New York, in constant contact with its

horror and its misery" (Comment.ii.39.88).

Safely sheltered and blissfully unconcerned about the crisis of Europe, as Lottman would have it, or attentive to the very heartbeat of the modern world, as David Gascoyne thought, what was the relation of Miller and his Villa Seurat friends to the backdrop of this tumultuous decade? In the first section we tried to outline the particular friendships which existed between Henry Miller and each of his closest associates. In the second section aspects of the group as an entity were discussed. In the chapters which now follow an attempt will be made to examine some of the links which existed between the Villa Seurat and its environs, to situate this group in the wider socio-cultural habitat of the age.

For if Miller's sanctuary was in a quiet impasse by the Parc de Montsouris, according to Waverly Root, "one of the most attractive expanses of greenery in Paris"(WRPHM.7W), it was also, as we have seen, no more than a short distance away from Montparnasse, Saint Germain des Prés, and the Latin Quarter, located, in other words, near the very epicentre of a complex cosmopolitan culture. "It was generally agreed, in those between-the-war-years," says Herbert Lottman, "that France was the center of the literary and artistic world, and of course Paris was the center of that center"(WiP.9). David Gascoyne once described a view of Paris at dusk, "Paris, smoking away in the descending night, and all her teeming and endlessly intricate life" (DG.ii.36). The twilight Gascoyne wrote about was not intended as a metaphor, and yet one might say that despite the gathering darkness of a war which to many had come to appear unavoidable, despite the many inner crises which had split asunder the very foundations of the Republic, Paris was still teeming with life, bustling with artistic and literary activity of the greatest variety.

Though he returned to New York in 1933, Samuel Putnam's marvellous description of the Montparnasse he knew still held true (with slight changes) for the latter part of the decade:

> a weird little land crowded with artists, alcoholics, prostitutes, pimps, poseurs, college boys, tourists, society slummers, spendthrifts, beggars, homosexuals, drug addicts, nymphomaniacs, sadists, masochists, thieves, gamblers, confidence men, mystics, fakers, paranoiacs, political refugees, anarchists, 'Dukes' and 'Countesses', men and women without a country; a land filled with a gaiety sometimes real and often feigned, filled with sorrow, suffering, poverty, frustration, bitterness, tragedy, suicide. (Putnam 116)

These and others were the characters who peopled the diaries of Anais Nin, the journals of David Gascoyne and the books of Henry Miller and Alfred Perlès, cluttered together in a turmoil of activity, in a rush of causes and concerns and ambitions. To delineate in detail a disorderly climate such as this is something numerous authors have attempted; but Paris remained "teeming and endlessly intricate" and any attempt to describe it comprehensively was an erecting of drab boundaries where none really existed. Nevertheless, there is no avoiding a survey of the Paris setting if the objective is a differentiated view, and so in what follows an attempt will be made to introduce various points of reference, groupings and movements and causes and individuals, the criterion for selection being whether those in view were part of the wider milieu of the Villa Seurat group or not. There can be no claim whatsoever to inclusiveness; the survey will be partial, moving back and forth between diffracted attention to larger groups and the occasional somewhat more detailed discussion of important individuals.

It is true that certain broad generalisations about the intellectual and artistic climate urge themselves upon the observer. One is immeditately impressed, for instance, by the notion that whereas the 1920s had been an age of hectic individualism, a time of experimentalism, eclecticism and merry confusion, the predominant literary consciousness of the following decade with its tremendous economic upheavals and social crises, was almost entirely <u>political</u>. These are useful operative labels - but no more. For behind the facade lies a past reality which cries out against the clear outlines of alluring categories. In his book on <u>The Auden Generation</u> Samuel Hynes has admirably dismantled many of the "myths of the 1930s". This, however, is not to say that there is no truth to such generalisations. They were indeed often valid currency amongst many of the protagonists of our story.

"Back to the Twenties" was for instance the (disparaging) title of Orwell's review of the first Booster in the New English Weekly in October 1937 (NEW.xii.2.30f). Still, grand politico-aesthetic charts usually prove imprecise when applied to the polymorphous terrain of the past as it emerges from contemporary sources. In his recent Recollections, Geoffrey Grigson has described "the Situation" in literary London in the period before he launched his New Verse, as "multiplex, multipolar, or multisiliquous" (GGRec.28). Precisely the same was true of Paris in the years 1937 to 1939.

Malcolm Cowley, too, has pointed out that there existed in Paris "dozens of special milieux", and in the spirit of the Putnam quotation this former literary exile listed

> the modernist poets, the rebel artists, the fashion writers, the jazz musicians, the boxers, the barmen, the gigolos, the lesbians, the entertainers, the sportifs, and the aristocrats of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.(DLB.xiii)

There were others as well, overlapping, intermingling, weaving in and out, shifting and metamorphic, and more often than not any one individual frequented more than one special milieu, belonged to two or more circles, and often these groups were mutually exclusive. David Gascoyne has written: "I suppose that in a sense my existence at that time was a promiscuous one, in that I simultaneously frequented many disparate groups and individuals who did not all know each other" (Letter 26th Feb.1983). Gascoyne was not the only one who led a "promiscuous life" in the Villa Seurat set. Hugh Gordon Porteus once remarked in Eliot's Criterion: "intellectual circles are not uniformly concentric: they overlap like the ripples released by a shower of stones in a pool" (Criterion.xvii.68.593). And, although other centres like New York and London also exhibited diverse literary and artistic milieus, Paris was still the most comprehensive of the cities of art, a larger pool, and the ripples of artistic life still more excited than anywhere else.

The Situation was multiform - and contradictory as well. Before proceeding to the first chapter of this survey, which is entitled "Literary Politics : Anti-Fascism in Paris and the Spanish Civil War", we must bring out into the open a basic contradiction at the heart of the art of the decade:

> 'All virtues are individual, all vices social,' yet social action, class action, mass action, is the duty of mankind: from these irreconcilable propositions the best of the Thirties writers and painters made art. (JS30s.151)

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane have pointed out that by the late 1920s modernism's original impetus had been lost, the reason being that "many of the battles for acceptance were won" (Modernism 204). Although not <u>all</u> battles had been won (Wyndham Lewis' portrait of T.S.Eliot was rejected by the Royal Aacdemy for the spring exhibition of 1938), a certain disintegration, a fanning out of artistic endeavour and possibility was the result, a freedom in which the individual vision might flower. But if this was the diastole, the systole was not long in coming. Herbert Lottman, who has delineated the reactions of Left Bank writers and artists to the lasting political crisis of the age, has shown that it was mostly political rhetoric with its cearly limited scope of reference, which flowed from the pens of the newly emergent <u>engagé</u> intellectual, and that "no great literary work" was produced in France in this period. Céline and the early Sartre, both "solitary souls who rejected organizations and causes", were possible exceptions in an art-scene largely determined by collective aims and collective activity:

> Observing from this distance the ferment of the 1930s, we cannot help being impressed by the extent to which the activity was collective - the product of organizations, of committees open or closed, or meetings, small and informal or large and public. (WiP.31)

Urgent collective action, however, implies communication, and popular communication usually means simplification: "The best art of our century might be complex, but what 'the age demanded' was simplicity, the direct speech of man to man"(JS30s.150). There was this new delimitation, narrowing of vision, a simplifying of attitude and objective, but there was also the above mentioned opening of indivi-

dual possibilities. As we shall see again and again in the course of this thesis, somewhere in between, somewhere between "the desire to communicate" and "the contrary wish to preserve the precious seed of individuality" (JS30s.150), the literary drama of the 1930s was acted out - even for the Villa Seurat extremists.

II. Literary Politics : Anti-Fascism in Paris and the Spanish Civil War.

"Our little world that the statesmen and politicians had put together with a paste and pasteboard of words at Versailles was falling apart again"(Fraenkel)(HR.38). Against a background of economic depression, of mass unemployment and continual social tension on the one hand, and a growing anxiety about Hitler's rise to power and aggressive German foreign policies on the other, public life in France had suffered massive disruptions again and again from the early 1930s on. "Fear of ruin and fear of war became the dominant motives in men's minds" (Williams 237), and fear of ruin and fear of war caused the atmosphere, not only in France, to become highly charged with political concerns. In the following chapter aspects of this political backdrop will be discussed, a realm of human experience often belittled by Miller and Durrell, but working a powerful influence on the Zeitgeist, which they did feel attuned to, just the same. There will be particular reference to Anais Nin and David Gascoyne, the two members of the Villa Seurat circle who did actually take an active part in the political struggles that were tearing Europe asunder.

In February 1934, some months before Miller's Tropic of Cancer was published, there were riots and street-fighting in Paris as right-wing mobs excited by fascist militants of the Croix de Feu, the Camelots du Roi, the Jeunesse Patriotes, the Action Française and others charged the Palais Bourbon. They were beaten back, over twenty people were killed, hundreds wounded, and the government of Edouard Daladier was obliged to resign. Shocked by the fact that a fascist takeover had only just been averted, the parties of the Left, hitherto bitterly divided, decided to end their vehement inner disputes in order to face the dangers together. Unity of action became the parole. Shortly after the February riots, there was a general strike and mass demonstrations by workers; various moves were undertaken towards alignment and reconciliation, a "Pact of Joint Action" signed, and in July of the following year communists, socialists, radical socialists, the trade unions, and other left-wing groups founded the Front Populaire.

In the following spring the Front Populaire won the general elections. 63% of the elected representatives of the National Assembly belonged to the Left. Victory celebrations changed the face of Paris: "Red flags floated on the old gray-blue buildings" (WiP.81). Some believed the Revolution had come. A new government under the socialist Léon Blum was formed, far-reaching social reform but not revolution was its programme. There were no communists in his cabinet. A series of spontaneous and enthusiatic strikes followed the election victory; they were "bloodless, but terrifying to an intensely class-conscious bourgeoisie" (Williams 238). The trade unions negotiated with the employers. The results, the so-called Matignon agreements represented a great step forward for the working class. They included a 15% wage increase, collective contracts of employment, the recognition of trade union rights, the 40 hour working week, paid holidays. But these long overdue reforms were won at a terrible cost, the sense of national unity itself. For the bourgeoisie soon recovered from the terrible fright of the proletarian victory, and the year of Blum's success soon became "the year of schism, when French national unity broke under the strain"(Williams 239).

Obsessed with the idea of vengeance, the employers organised themselves, refused to cooperate with the governement and the working class organisations, throttled production, withheld investments, and strove to torpedo the Front Populaire's social legislation wherever they could. There was no economic upswing. In practice the situation of the workers hardly improved and the social and economic crisis remained chronic. In November 1936, five months after the Matignon agreements were signed, Anais Nin described the atmosphere in Paris as "oppressive and heavy with political unrest"(AN.ii.147). In March of the followng year there were riots in Paris. Unemployment was still very high. In October, the month of the second Villa Seurat Booster, an English observer noted gloomily:

> France is at the moment in a state almost of liquefaction. The present Government is despised; the past Government was despised, and the Government before that - the Right Government - was despised, too. All parties and all politicians are discredited in France today.
> (ND.i.18.9)

By this time the end of the Front Populaire dream had already been ushered in. On June 21st 1937, only a year after its spectacular victory Blum's government resigned. Another Front Populaire cabinet under Chautemps followed (this is "the present Government" of the above quotation), but remained in office only until January 1938. At that point Blum attempted to assemble another cabinet but failed; now the socialists withdrew their support of Chautemps, who nevertheless continued until March. Blum proposed a National Union cabinet. When this fell in April, Daladier returned to power. The political climate now evinced clearly that shift to the Right which had begun in June 1937, a shift which gained momentum and did not even halt in the autumn of 1938 when Daladier revoked most of Blum's social legislation. The direction was the État Francais of Marshall Pétain. "French politics became a cold civil war" (Williams 240).

Aggravating these internal ideological conflicts and economic crises, France was beset by difficulties in her foreign relations. In the end, these proved insoluble. The general sense of anxiety and hopelessness was to increase remarkably over the years as the international situation deteriorated. To those who did not shut their eyes, war came to seem virtually inevitable. German rearmament, repeated violations of the Versailles Treaty, Hitler's occupation of the demilitarised Rhineland, Mussolini's violent annexation of Abyssinia, the return of the Saar to Germany, the various blatant failures of the League of Nations, all these and other threats to French security did not, however, lead to an inner national reconciliation (as eventually in Great Britain), but divided the country all the more. France was left in a state of paralysis.

The insurrection of the Spanish generals in July 1936 quickly brought the inner division and virtual immobility of the Third Republic to a head. The Front Populaire supporters, still inebriated by their tremendous success, were abruptly shown how limited was their government's real scope for action. At first Blum promised to help the elected government in Madrid (also a Popular Front coalition), sending war material, dispatching advisers, and permitting the recruitment of volunteers. Within weeks, however, he was forced to adopt a passive stance. There was a real danger, A.J.P.Taylor has said, "that French

military aid for the Spanish republic might provoke a similar civil war in France" (AJPT.484). Less than a month after the generals had begun their march on Madrid, the French and the British suggested a Non-Intervention Agreement to the other great powers. Invalidated by open breaches on the part of Germany and Italy, and later the Soviet Union, this "solution" disappointed and thoroughly antagonised many of Blum's staunchest adherents. The Front Populaire, a brittle construction at best, was itself divided between those who favoured French intervention and those who did not.

Active support of Republican Spain, however, soon shifted to another, a sub-governmental level. Here it became the very focal point of the struggle between the forces of fascism and those opposing it. For the intellectuals generally in France and other Western countries, most of whom were Popular Front sympathisers, the Spanish war was a very special war: "it was the first battle in the apocalyptic struggle of Left and Right that the 'thirties generation had been predicting for years"(Hynes 242). It opened to the ecrivain engagé the possibility of direct action against the seemingly unstoppable advance of fascism. As in England, so in France the "struggle against fascism had been a popular phrase among intellectuals ever since 1931, and particularly since Hitler came to power in January 1933"(AJPT.486). Now finally "there was something real to do"(AJPT.487)....

But even before Franco's rebellion, Paris had been the scene of anti-fascist propaganda work. In 1935, in the months following a change in Stalin's foreign policy, which not only brought about a Franco-Soviet rapprochement, but that new unity-of-action course as well, many new so-called front organisations sprouted up. This new course, which was finally sanctioned by the Comintern's World Congress in July and August 1935, was received enthusiastically by many West European intellectuals and writers who believed the schism in the Labour Movement to be one of the main reasons for the fascist successes. In most Western countries, including France, intellectuals were convinced that in an age where many conservatives viewed the rise of Hitler with great sympathies and appeasement seemed to play into the hands of fascism, the Soviet Union was the only country seriously willing to combat fascism and to defend democracy, indeed, that the Soviet Union

represented one of the very few ideals one could still believe in. Orwell, who sceptically explained the Stalinist sympathies of the young intellectuals as "the patriotism of the deracinated", said in 1939/40:

> Patriotism, religion, empire, military glory - all in one word, Russia. Father, king, leader, hero, saviour - all in one word, Stalin. God - Stalin. The devil - Hitler. Heaven - Moscow. Hell - Berlin. (CE.i.565)

Widely, reservations about cooperating with communists were given up and participation in the Popular Front became a social obligation. A drift, a landslide to the Left set in. Of course, to say this is this simplifying developments, but many left-wing writers and conservative critics would have agreed with this outline at the time. Referring to the United States, the conservative Criterion's D.G.Bridson said that "most of the avant garde intelligentsia may be said to have landslid leftwards" (Criterion.xvi.63.404), while in an article called "The Left Wing Orthodoxy", Stephen Spender remarked of the situation in Britain: "When Mr.Wyndham Lewis writes of the Left Wing Orthodoxy of contemporary writers and intellectuals, none of them ... should quarrell with the description" (NV.xxxi/xxxii.12). France, too, experienced that "immense sinistral push" which Hugh Gordon Porteus discerned in English intellectual life (Criterion.xvii.66.193). But before discussing some of the manifestations of this new literary climate, mention must be made of that group of individuals living in Paris for whom the notion of fighting fascism was not just a "popular phrase" but a reality determining much of their thinking and acting, the German émigrés.

In his Miller biography Alfred Perlès only briefly described the German emigrants in Paris: "Their sad, preoccupied faces dotted the terraces of the Dôme and the Coupole fronts" (MFHM.123). The story of their exile, sometimes voluntary, mostly forced, has often been told, how they took flight from country to country, how they were defamed and blacklisted, how their books were burned, their paintings and sculptures taken from museums and destroyed, how they sometimes passed through torture and Nazi concentration camps before being able to escape, how they continued to live in fear of kidnapping, deportation

and starvation, how they were plagued by home-sickness, by the sense of uprooting, by the strangeness of their new surroundings, uncertainty about the future and the sudden change in fortune, how the years in France eventually turned into a veritable nightmare, how at the outbreak of the war many of these sworn enemies of Hitler were locked in primitive internment camps by the French authorities and how many, unless lucky enough to escape, were handed over to the Gestapo when the armistice was signed in 1940, or, like Miller's friend, Hans Reichel, herded from camp to camp throughout the war. Lion Feuchtwanger's Exil, his autobiographical Der Teufel in Frankreich or Alfred Kantorowicz's Exil in Frankreich are resonant chronicles, case histories of the plight of the European refugee, the numbers of which were to increase a hundred-fold and a thousand-fold in the years to come.

The Villa Seurat group, it seems, had little contact with these sad-faced political refugees, none at all, it seems, with their literary organisations, with the Association of German Writers in Exile, their "Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek", a collection of those books that had been burned by the Nazis. The presidents of this Library were André Gide, Romain Rolland, H.G.Wells, and Heinrich Mann. But, as Herbert Lottman pointed out, "the majority of refugees lived in a kind of ghetto, reading their own papers, frequenting their own clubs and cafés"(WiP.41). Nevertheless, they were a presence. Perhaps it is not really apposite to introduce at this point Hans Reichel, the above-mentioned Villa Seurat painter. He was no political refugee, the motives for his exile were apparently of a personal nature. Still, like the surrealist Max Ernst and like many other Germans who had come to live in France long before the advent of the Nazis, the outbreak of the war forced him to share the fate of the political refugees. It is not entirely clear why he left Munich in 1928. David Gascoyne remembered him as "the German Jewish refugee painter", noting that Henry Miller's attitude to Reichel seemed to him

> typically equivocal - he both admired and was influenced by him, he was well aware of and sympathised with his plight as a refugee and a victim of persecution, yet at the same time he treated him, and not only in his absence, as a clown and a figure of fun. (Letter 26th Feb.1983)

Hans Reichel

But it is quite possible that Gascoyne was mistaken about Reichel being a refugee (as he was about Reichel being of Jewish origin). Franz Roh, an acquaintance from the Munich days, has said that Reichel "loved the sedate cultural atmosphere until the thunderous rumblings of 'Hitler-culture' were audible there", and that in 1928 "the time had come for this sensitive man to flee to Paris, before the advance of the swastika-carriers" (1). But this may also be a post factum embellishment. To have foreseen the coming of Hitler in 1928, in the liberal Weimar Republic's boom days before the Wall Street Crash, might well have needed more political sensitivity than Reichel, in the words of the same critic "an introverted spirit, cocooned in himself" (FMHR.65), could have been expected to muster. But we may be mistaken in this assumption, for though hardly a politique, Reichel often and unhappily stumbled and fell into the political vortices of his time. Deeply influenced by his acquaintance Rainer Maria Rilke, Reichel was anything but a politically minded man; nevertheless, like Perlès, he was locked up for several months in the psychiatric ward of a military hospital at the outbreak of the First World War, when he said: "I will not shoot at a living man" (FMHR.13). And he was imprisoned again and maltreated in 1919, for hiding in his studio in Schwabing Ernst Toller, one of the revolutionary leaders of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, which had just been quashed. In Eine Jugend in Deutschland Toller, the famous expressionist playwright, described how his friend Reichel (here called Lech) helped him at the risk of severe punishment, and Miller reported how the painter sometimes grotesquely acted out scenes of his ordeal in jail in Remember to Remember. Still, as Francois Mathey points out, he went to jail "not for political reasons" (FMHR.15). He was imprisoned because he had helped a friend.

Reichel was a successful artist in the 1920s, and to talk of "persecution" seems somewhat exaggerated. He was a friend of the elder Paul Klee (who also lived in the Werneckschlössl until he was called to the Bauhaus in 1920). He had exhibitions all over Germany, from Hamburg to Munich, from Frankfurt to Erfurt and Halle, visited the Bauhaus in 1924, where he met Gropius, Kandinsky and Feininger. He was a successful artist. In 1927, however, a woman he loved died of tuberculosis, and Reichel's life suffered a deep caesura. He left Munich that year, he left behind his wife and home, his acquaintances and friends, his

entire former existence: "Reichel sentit sa vie brisée, le bouleversement qu'il ressentit le rendit étranger à toutes ses relations antérieures. Il disparut de Munich, qu'il ne devait plus revoir" (HRCat.np).

If one returns to the world of the more immediately political exiles, to those persecuted for reasons of belief, religion or race, one must say that although the Germans constituted the largest group of exiles in Paris in the 1930s, they formed an almost negligible part of the milieu of the Villa Seurat. Some contacts existed, but they were insignificant. Anais Nin's doctor was a German refugee. In 1939 she described a meeting with Werner Lenneman, a Jewish actor, who had starred in Fritz Lang's Metropolis and now only "felt trapped, because he would end in a concentration camp" (AN.ii.342). Miller and friends did contribute to magazines which occasionally printed work by exiled German writers. The Marseilles Cahiers du Sud, a regular contributor to which was Walter Benjamin, printed work by Miller (MFHM.163), while Mesures, which published "Via Dieppe-Newhaven" and Saroyan's "L'Homme dont le coeur était resté dans les montagnes", also published work by Berthold Brecht, Robert Musil, Stefan George and others. The Villa Seurat must have been aware of "A Whole literature in Exile" - thus the title of an essay by Ernst Leonard in an issue of Purpose which also printed Anais Nin's "Creative Principle in Analysis"(2). Nevertheless, the work of German political exiles, writers and artists, their painful struggles to keep alive "the other Germany", receive next to no mention in the journals and contemporary notes of the Villa Seurat.

In a letter David Gascoyne does describe meeting a number of German and Austrian refugees at Pierre Jean Jouve's "Soirées de la rue de Tournon". They, in turn, introduced him "to a friend of theirs often to be found at the café tabac at the corner of the rue de Tournon, the novelist Joseph Roth"(3). In his Paris journal Gascoyne, however, does not mention this encounter, and when he does refer to some German anti-Nazi activists it is revealingly set in an international framework.

It was with a disgust which the 'a-political' Miller himself would hardly have been able to rival that David Gascoyne attended in July 1938 "a séance extraordinaire of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture against Fascism" (DG.ii.49). Excepting from his averse comments only La Pasionaria, Anna Seghers and Reichel's old friend Ernst Toller, Gascoyne felt intensely dissatisfied with the meeting as such:

> No one could care more passionately about the things discussed last night than I do. But the strongest feelings with which I came away were impatience and disgust. What good do they do anyone in the end, all these earnest speeches full of vague and abstract phrases about liberty and culture and democracy, beyond giving the speakers the pleasure of hearing their own voices and of making noble but indefinite appeals. (DG.ii.50)

By the summer of 1938 - it was in these days that Arthur Koestler broke with the Party - disillusion had begun to set in. The year before had been a "time of defeats", Herbert Lottman says(WiP.119). Yet despite David Gascoyne's impatience with this meeting, there had been times when such gatherings appeared to be more than a forum for 'revolutionary' platitudes and anti-fascist patter, more than a "sombre farce" (DG.ii.50). At one time such rallies and meetings expressed the hopes and aspirations of many of those newly concerned with the rise of the fascist dictatorships. For these revolutionary men and women no literary event in that decade was as important and symbolic as the dramatic communion which had given birth to the International Writers Association for the Defence of Culture (IWA) exactly three years before, that is, the International Writers Congress for the Defense of Culture of June 1935 (WiP.83).

David Gascoyne, who was in Paris at the time, may have attended. Miller never mentioned it, neither did Perlès, nor Durrell, nor Anais Nin. Still, insofar as it formed the immediate and powerful backdrop it merits mention. On the evening of the 21st June 1935 the 3000 seats in the Palais de la Mutualité were sold out. A literary élite of socialists, communists and other anti-fascists from all over the world was assembled. Though the shadow of Stalin already loomed threateningly over the great hall, the Congress was more than a Party convention singing in unison. There was dissent and some tumultuous scenes

particularly when the brutal treatment of the dissident Victor Serge in the Soviet Union was mentioned. There was also an uproar when the speech by Breton, who had been denied participation for slapping Ilya Ehrenburg in the face, was read by Paul Eluard(WiP.92). As Herbert Lottman notes, the "congress was a microcosm of the political wars raging outside" (WiP.83).

Among the French who took part was the famous André Gide, still speaking of his "love" for the Soviet Union as the "ideal fatherland" (WiP.95f). There was also Louis Aragon, who eloquently denounced his old surrealist friends (WiP.96). There were André Malraux, Henri Babusse and Romain Rolland. The German section was comprised of Bertold Brecht, Heinrich Mann, Klaus Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Robert Musil (an Austrian), Ernst Toller and Anna Seghers, amongst many others. The English delegation included E.M.Forster, along with John Strachey and Aldous Huxley. Forster "did what most non-Communist participants were to do that week: he criticized the limitations on freedom in his country"(WiP.87). The Russian delegates included Ilya Ehrenburg, Michael Koltzov, Aleksei Tolstoy and Boris Pasternak, who told the astounded audience: "Organization is the death of art ... Do not, I implore you, do not organize" (WiP.84f). We have referred to the shadow of Stalin; full of praise for Soviet Russia, the Soviet delegates either attacked or took care not to defend their fellow writer Victor Serge, and they were repaid in kind: not one of them attended the 1938 meeting David Gascoyne described above, for by then most of them "were in concentration camps or in prison - or dead"(WiP.121).

At this "congress of stars"(WiP.83) the desire for unity of action, and (as Breton and his followers insisted in their pamplet "When the Surrealists Were Right") the schedule set up by the pro-communist organisers, tended to smother any discussion of Stalinist repression. Still, for many the five-day meeting seemed a beacon of international solidarity, the expression of the belief that the writer ought to be more than a passive observer of the world around. Stephen Spender said in his World Within World:

> The peculiarity of the 1930's was not that the subject of a civilization in decline was new, but that the hope of saving or transforming it had arisen, combined with the positive necessity of withstanding tyrannies. (SSWWW.249)

For a while, indeed, such enthusiasm and optimism about withstanding tyranny predominated. In France the new activism had already brought about a Committee of Vigilance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals, which became, as Herbert Lottman said, "a vehicle for a whole generation of writers, jornalists, teachers, poets, and painters to take part, or feel as if they were taking part, in a movement directed against immediate danger" (WiP.79). And these very intellectuals played a crucial role both in the formation of the Front Populaire and in its surprising election victory. Blum himself after all was a journalist and a man of letters. And, what was more, the victories of the new unity of action, many felt, were not bought at the cost of surrendering one's individual vision. Invoking what he called an "individualistic anti-fascism", Stephen Spender wrote:

> This was one of those intervals of history in which events make the individual feel that he counts. His actions or his failure to act could lead to the winning or the losing of the Spanish Civil War, could even decide whether or not the Second World War was going to take place. (SS30s.25)

However illusory in the end - Spender himself was a member of that, in Gascoyne's view, "disgraceful" English delegation at the 1938 International Association of Writers meeting - this feeling was real enough at the time, and in order to understand the terrible disillusionment of the thirties generation which occured in the Booster/Delta years, one must appreciate the magnitude of its dream, the idealism and hope it had generated. It is small wonder that when the Spanish Republic was threatened in the summer of 1936 - it was the time when Stalin put on trial and then had executed the Old Bolsheviks - thousands flocked to its banners. "The No pasàran! of the Republic seemed of direct relevance to the anti-Fascists of the rest of Europe". Spain became a very special arena for many intellectuals, for in Spain "they had an opportunity to take the offensive at last" (WiP.104). Thousands were willing to support a war effort, which, from a distance at least, offered alternatives striking in their clarity, good was facing evil,

freedom and democracy was facing inhumanity and oppression. Spain seemed a field for just action(4). And it seemed, as Spender said, a field for individual action as well. For a while, this belief with all the inevitable rhetoric appeared more than vindicated by events, especially by the example of André Malraux, "the Byron of the Age" (HT.351).

Malraux was already a legend when the Spanish War offered him the perfect opportunity "to live his life as a novel, with himself as hero" (WiP.99). He organised arms purchases and transports across the border, speaking at mass demonstrations, touring Europe and the United States in order to raise funds, even leading a self-collected squadron of fighter-planes against the Nationalists - and writing a book about it. L'Espoir was finished in six months, and Malraux then proceeded to turn it into a film in Barcelona, finishing it, when that city was besieged by the Nationalists, in Paris. Spender's idea of an "individualistic anti-fascism", born of a personal sense of commitment and implication, and resulting in an active opposing of tyranny, seemed a real possibility in the war's early stages. One afternoon Malraux confided to Gide that he was planning an attack on Oviedo. Herbert Lottman notes: "In those days once could divulge a war plan in a Left Bank living room"(WiP.103).

The title of Herbert Lottman's chapter dealing with the conflict in Spain is: "Malraux and the Intellectual's War". The Spanish Civil War was not an intellectuals' war in the sense that intellectuals fought it or even had a hand in directing it; the vast majority of combatants were Spanish workers and peasants. And the the vast majority of foreigners who fought and died in the International Brigades were workers as well(5). It was an intellectuals' war, because many intellectuals took a deep and emotional interest in it, intellectuals on the Left - and on the Right, as well. And so, soon, "Spain was transformed into the battleground of rival ideologies"(AJPT.486).

The Spanish Republic had the sympathies of many artists and writers in the West. There were exceptions. A number, like T.S.Eliot, H.G.Wells, Charles Morgan and Ezra Pound, declared themselves neutral. Others sided openly with Franco. Lawrence Durrell's zany acquaintance,

Potocki of Montalk, wrote in his hand printed Right Review in September 1937: "The Japanese and Spanish wars against international Yiddish money tyranny are getting on very nicely, thank you" (RR.4.np.). Somewhat less eccentric, Paul Claudel glorified the murdered priests of Spain in "Aux Martyrs Espagnol"(6). Douglas Jerrold and Arnold Lunn, both Roman Catholics, wrote for Franco. Roy Campell, the South African poet who fought for the insurgents (and later became a friend of Lawrence Durrell), was "one of the most ardent apologists for the nationalists" (HT.359). Evelyn Waugh, Arthur Bryant, Edmund Blunden, Arthur Maclean, Geoffrey Moss, and Eleanor Smith sided with the insurgents. Louis Ferdinand Céline derided the foreign tourists of the Republican trenches in his anti-semitic and anti-communist Bagatelles pour un massacre of 1937. In France generally the forces of the Right were "more distinguished intellectually, more unconstitutional and more determined than in any other surviving democracy" (HT.348). In December 1936 a manifesto declaring for Franco was signed by Claudel, Ramon Fernandez, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Abel Bonnard, Léon Daudet and others. Robert Brasillach (later executed for collaborating with the Nazis) was in the trenches of Madrid on the side of Franco reporting for the fascist Je Suis Partout. As John Harrison points out: "The 'intellectual foreign legion of fascism' was more widespread and numerous than many might think" (Harrison 35).

Nevertheless, even in France, according to Hugh Thomas, in the end "the Left took the initiative in public opinion"(HT.348) and in the Anglo-American democracies, the intellectual class was overwhelmingly in favour of the Republic. In England, of the 121 writers questioned by Nancy Cunard only five sided with Franco. Sixteen said they were neutral. In the United States, according to a survey by the League of American Writers, 410 of 418 writers questioned were in sympathy with the Spanish Republicans(7).

A number of these writers and poets went to Spain and actually fought Franco. George Orwell, for instance, joined the P.O.U.M. militia in Catalonia. Roger Klein, a friend of Miller, Anais Nin and Brassai, went to Spain as early as July 1936 and was subsequently wounded in action(8). Some, like the young English poet John Cornford, were killed. Some, like the German poet Gustav Regler worked as political com-

missars to the International Brigades. Disguised as journalists, like Arthur Koestler, some operated as spies for the Comintern behind enemy lines. Some supported the war effort by running ambulance units (W.H. Auden). Many put their talents to propaganda. In the company of Roland Penrose, David Gascoyne flew from Toulouse to Barcelona in October 1936. He translated and read news-bulletins for the broadcasts of the Propaganda Ministry of the Catalan government(9). Others, like Hemingway or Spender, reported on the course of events for newspapers at home. Many intellectuals came only on a short visit. Cyril Connolly described in a letter to a friend "a fairly typical time in Spain", in Barcelona:

> The Majestic is a much nicer hotel than the Continental. The first night there was an air-raid alarm and we ran into a refuge but nothing happened. I was much more social than before - Spender was there and Christina Hastings and an awful American called Muriel Draper and a man we all hated called Catlin and Auden and Basil Murray and a horde of journalists, English clergymen, French deputies etc. (CCJM.282)

This tourism of war as practiced by Connolly and thousands of others, the so-called "right left people", was rightly disparaged, one sometimes feels, by Céline, who called them "pleasure seekers, news-loving sadists"(WiP.104). Orwell also attacked the "red duchesses and 'broadminded' deans (who) toured the battlefields of the Spanish war"(CE.i.563). Nevertheless, it was only the obverse side of deeply idealistic engagement by a number of writers who risked life and health for their belief in democracy and freedom. Many of those who stayed for longer came away disillusioned:

> Most of the writers engaged in Spain were under Communist discipline, or they willingly accepted it for the good of the Republican cause. It also meant accepting a merciless purge of anarchist and Trotskyist volunteers on the Republican side, which often went as far as their execution as alleged traitors. Sooner or later, no matter what one's motives had been for enlisting on the republican side, one came face to face with evidence of the Communist drive against the Trotskyists, and usually, for the good of the cause, one remained silent about it. (WiP.106)

David Gascoyne later dated the beginning of his disenchantment with communism to his stay in Catalonia. In Barcelona for just over a month, he felt himself very much en rapport with the anarchists there, and he soon discovered that "the Communists hated the Anarchists and the P.O.U.M. (Trotskyists) much more than they hated the Fascists" (DG.i.45). Though still a member of the Communist Party, his "deviant associations" with the P.O.U.M., with members of the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) and with anarchists did not worry him very much at the time (DG.i.50). It was only some months after his return to England, however, that the communist backed police combed the streets of Barcelona in search of anarchists, P.O.U.M. members and even their foreign supporters. George Orwell and his wife barely escaped alive. It was a time of growing disillusionment (10).

In England, however, and in France, as people like Orwell and André Gide were to discover upon their return from Catalonia and the U.S.S.R. respectively, not very many of the supporters of the Popular Front were keen on distinguishing between criticism of Stalinist atrocities and support of the fascists. "Unhappily", said a critic in the Criterion, "everyone who is not pro-Stalinist is at present apt to be labelled 'fascist'" (Criterion.xvii.69.798f). Operating at a very high emotional pitch, the propaganda struggle for public opinion (which included hundreds of poems and short-stories about Spain, only the smallest number of which bear re-reading) actually blurred and covered over the fact that in Spain and in the ideal Soviet fatherland persecution and political murder had become the order of the day. And even if the anti-fascist intelligentsia had actually wanted to see, according to Orwell, these atrocities were often beyond the scope of their experience and thus their understanding. They were words and no more:

> Hunger, hardship, solitude, exile, war, prison, persecution, manual labour - hardly even words. No wonder that the huge tribe known as 'the right left people' found it so easy to condone the purge-and-Ogpu side of the Russian régime and the horrors of the first Five-Year Plan. They were so gloriously incapable of understanding what it all meant. (CE.i.567)

In October 1936 after the murder of Lorca, the London Contemporary Poetry and Prose, a magazine with both surrealist and communist affiliations, protested:

> The Spanish people are fighting againsts fascism; they need money, food, arms; 'non-intervention', when the fascists are being armed by other fascist countries, is criminal; 'non-intervention' means active help to fascism. And fascism means torturing of liberals, socialists, communists, paci fists, intellectuals, the burning of books, the negation of art and liberty. (CPP.vi.106)

Soon, however, it became clear to eye-witnesses and to other observers, that not only fascists were negating art and liberty and that not only fascists were capable of exterminating opposition groups. Some, like Orwell, attempted to tear away the veil of silence, others, like David Gascoyne, continued for a while their Popular Front support, then quietly dropped out, losing, as the young poet put it in 1938, "most of my former interest in politics"(DG.ii.45).

Nonetheless, the Popular Front campaign for "the people of Spain" continued. Aside from the more immediately literary forms of protest, poems like Edgell Rickwood's "To the Wife of a Non-Interventionist Statesman", magazines like the monthly Spain at War or the many Left Book Club publications, aid organisations sprouted up, fund-raising events proliferated, exhibitions and meetings in favour of the Republicans flowered, manifestos were signed and issued. The English surrealist group's "Declaration on Spain", for example, supported "the popular demand that the ban on the export of arms to the Spanish Government be lifted"(CPP.vi.flysheet). Returning from Barcelona, David Gascoyne delivered to Fenner Brockway, the General Secretary of the I.L.P. an assortment of posters of the Spanish War for an exhibition "soon to be held in aid of supplies (not armaments, of course, unfortunately) for the Anti-fascists"(DG.i.48). When he spoke to an Oxford literary society about surrealism he took care to give "a certain amount of attention" to the war in Spain as well (DG.i.49). And, as another diary entry of April 1937 shows, whereas several communists like Roger Roughton and Humphrey Jennings decided to leave the surrealist group, others like Hugh Sykes Davies and David Gascoyne "put up with being in the group in order to subvert 'well-known

artists and intellectuals', like Read and Nash and Moore, into signing political manifestoes occasionally" (DG.i.74). We will have occasion later to discuss further aspects of this enthusiasm for Spain and its effect on the English and American literary scene. But for most of these pro-Republican propaganda campaigns in the Western world, Paris was still the organisational centre.

A German exile, the journalist Willi Münzenberg, who worked for the Comintern Propaganda Department and was already renowned for his Brown Book on the Reichstag Fire and Hitler's Reign of Terror, coordinated this broad anti-fascist propaganda drive. It was Münzenberg who organised that "brilliantly successful International Writers' Congress" of June 1935(Nollau 186). Now all his attention, and that of the Comintern, was directed to Spain. As Hugh Thomas pointed out: "A large number of organizations for aid were set up, nominally humanitarian and independent, in fact dominated by communists". And he went on to add: "Paris, and Willi Münzenberg, remained the centre of this activity"(HT.361). Paris was a bee-hive, and it was the all-important stop-over en route to Spain. In the rue de Lafayette was situated the central recruiting office of the International Brigades, the formation of which began in October 1936. Hundreds of volunteers, mostly young communists, passed through its doors (HT.455). Like many leading functionaries, Joseph Broz, the later Tito, was dispatched to Paris to coordinate the steady flow of East-European volunteers into Spain(11). With the help of Christian Zervos of the well-known Cahiers d'Art, David Gascoyne and Roland Penrose obtained visas from the Catalonian Government Propaganda Bureau off the Avenue de l'Opéra (DG.i.42f). On his way back to England Gascoyne stopped again in Paris in order to call on Picasso, whose mother he had visited in Barcelona. Eight months before the famous Guernica, Picasso seemed to Gascoyne "depressed and anxious about Spain"(DG.i.49). Orwell too stopped over in Paris for a day, collected his papers and then, "perhaps a little incongruously in the circumstances", as his biographer Bernard Crick puts it, went off to visit Henry Miller, who intrigued the Englishman by the fact that "he felt no interest in the Spanish war whatever" (12). Sometimes such literary stop-overs became regular literary events. About the time the communist henchmen were busy suppressing with violence the P.O.U.M. and the C.N.T. Anarchists, Hemingway gave a

joint reading at Sylvia Beach's bookshop with Stephen Spender, whom he had met in Spain. For those present, notes Sylvia Beach's biographer:

> the Spanish civil war was a poet's war, a war that Spender thought resonated a 'poetic purity' and intensity as well as Spanish passion, idealism and violence of temperament. Here was an open and genuine resistance to fascism; as such, it foreshadowed for Spender and others the combat of the modern individual against machinery, militarism, and bureaucracies.(SB.372)

But Paris was more than a point of departure and a haven to return to. A veritable greenhouse, the underwood of committees there had burgeoned in great profusion, and it is no mean task to find one's way through the undergrowth. In July 1936 a Comité International de l'Aide au Peuple Espagnol was set up after a meeting in the Salle Wagram. Malraux, president of the World Committee against Fascism and War(13), was the main speaker. Soon this new comité had subsidiaries in numerous other countries, collecting money and material goods for the Republicans(14). Another organisation, a Committee for the Defense of Spanish Culture, assembled by the Paris based International Association of Writers, conveyed propaganda material to Spain. According to Tristan Tzara, whom Gascoyne had met in Barcelona when the ex-Dadaist was delivering a new ambulance unit, that particular offshoot of the IWA also operated "a courier service between volunteers of the international brigades and their families, bringing newspapers, books, and magazines to the front by plane"(15). It was into this hive of aid committees and propaganda activity that Anais Nin stumbled in the summer of 1936.

As early as June 1936, well before the rebellion of Franco, Mola, Jonjurjo and associates, she noted in her diary: "The Spanish Civil War is in the air", and she added: "It is as if Gonzalo had come in answer of my question: 'What does it mean, what can I do, as an artist?'" (AN.ii.86). Whether or not this is an embellishment added during her frequent revisions of the diary, she was initiated into the world of politics by the said Gonzalo More, a Peruvian adventurer and Marxist. He was a musician married to Helba Huara, a dancer whom Wambly Bald had celebrated in his weekly "La Vie de Bohème" column some years before (DLB.16). From 1936 onwards Anais Nin's diary records her rela-

tionship, probably another love-affair, with this stormy South American activist. He was in many ways Miller's opposite but in one respect they were similar. He too, as her diary underlines, was "a Bohemian and a bum" whom she had saved from dissipation (AN.ii.345). Her journal of these years echoes with their discussions about art and the 'Revolution', and, though never fully abandoning her psychoanalytical distrust of solutions which posit an outer change rather than "a change of heart", Anais Nin became actively involved in the cause of the Spanish Republic(16). It is not intended to disparage her engagement if one says that it remained largely confined to the socially acceptable anti-fascism of the bourgeois which we have referred to above. Deeply moved and fascinated by what she saw as the tragedy of Spain - "They place dynamite in the wombs of women" (AN.ii.155) - she felt strongly an urge to give up her detached position and to help. "In Spain the blood is flowing"(AN.ii.156). Such interjections dot the pages of her diary. Like David Gascoyne, though more as an observer, she too attended political meetings. She described in her diary a communist mass rally where La Pasionaria and André Malraux spoke: "She with her ardent face and powerful voice, he with a nervous intensity, another kind of fire" (AN.ii.108). A few months later she noted with impatience:

> Meeting held to help Republican Spain with Gonzalo. Alberti's poems were read. All these words I hear, lyric speeches, romantic flourishes, wreaths, prayers, poetic lamentations, irritate me. I see in revolution a vital life-and-death matter, a struggle one must enter directly and violently, by action. Why do they talk so much, recite poetry? (AN.ii.164)

She bought for Gonzalo More a printing press, so that he might fulfil his 'revolutionary' calling, busied herself for a while issuing pamphlets, writing letters and producing other kinds of propaganda(17). With certain misgivings - a revolution, she was certain, would mean "just a change of men in power, that is all"(AN.ii.155)- she encouraged More in his political activity, encouraged him in this as she had encouraged Miller in his. "Gonzalo obtains help from the Spanish legation. They will supply money, stamps, paper, printing facilities. Gonzalo has written his first manifesto. He is glad" (AN.i.156). Anais Nin wrote about a meeting of the Comité

Ibérien pour la Défense de la République Espagnole, which was apparently led by More himself and by Pablo Neruda: "Gonzalo has definitely entered into his activities as an agitator, writer, talker, leader of eighty South American intellectuals". And she added: "He is close to Pablo Neruda, to José Bergamin"(18). Anais Nin and More worked together in an anti-fascist organisation called Paix et Démocratie (led by a Sorbonne professor), and the young woman succeeded in enlisting the support of her former analyst, René Allendy (AN.ii.281). But because she was "the daughter of an aristocrat", she was denounced at the Spanish Embassy and Gonzalo More was even accused of being a fascist spy (AN.ii.261). Though they were able to convince Paix et Démocratie that, unlike her parents, she sympathised with the Republicans, she was forbidden to continue helping with the press (which she had donated!) (AN.ii.261). Even in Paris such denunciation was a deadly business: Gonzalo More was obliged to interrogate and sentence to death an informer, who was apparently duly shot (AN.ii. 312). But working for Paix et Démocratie was dangerous as well, the signatories of a manifesto about "capitalist investment in Spain" felt that they were exposing themselves to assassination (AN.ii.247). But although Anais Nin continued assisting Gonzalo More despite the ban, her scepticism increased. By August 1937 she said that she could no longer

> write letters full of platitudes, heroic bombast, sentimental propaganda, naive humanitarianism such as Gonzalo does, collecting money, entertaining volunteers, attending meetings, listening to the news on the radio and reading newspapers from cover to cover.(AN.ii.225)

Still, when, in the early months of 1939, the Spanish Republic was finally vanquished and thousands of refugees fled across the border, she actually showed much courage by offering practical help. Most of the refugees were immediately interned by the French authorities but some made their way to Paris. "These were the fighters, the wounded, the sick. Everybody was afraid to help them"(AN.ii.332). Illegally Anais Nin found shelter and food for a number of them. "Gonzalo and I scoured Paris for empty rooms or apartments". She also attempted to secure visas in the Cuban consulate. "It was a tragic month" she wrote in her diary, which account of the life of pre-war Paris plainly did more than lovingly describe (as Herbert Lottman has implied)(19) the

little, sheltered world of the Villa Seurat....

Notes

1. FMHR.65, 67.
2. Purpose.x.3.130-135, 147-152.
3. Letter 26th Feb.1983; DG.ii.36.
4. Especially as, when the fighting began in July 1936, the communists held no more than four percent of the electoral votes (HT.611; AKExF.13).
5. HT.985, AJPT.487.
6. HT.271,695.
7. HT.347; WiP.121.
8. AN.ii.103,140.
9. DG.i.43; RPScr.84.
10. DG.i.38; BCGO.314; CCJM.281.
11. Nollau 190; HT.454.
12. BCGO.315; CE.i.569.
13. Was this organisation identical with 'the League against War and Fascism', also known as 'the Amsterdam Peace Committee against War and Fascism'?
14. HT.361,352.
15. WiP.107; DG.i.46.
16. AN.ii.99,146,155.
17. AN.ii.239,261.
18. AN.ii.144,153,164.
19. AN.ii.332; WiP.42; HT.923.

III. The Villa Seurat and Literary Paris 1934-1939 : Céline, Cendrars, Artaud, Queneau and Others.

In the foregoing chapter Herbert Lottman was quoted as saying that although much of the important work of the time was political and collective, "it would seem that to produce enduring literature, one had to be a loner". He cited the names of Céline and Sartre(1). In fact (and as Lottman's book itself goes on to show) this division between "the solitary souls and the misanthropes" on the one hand and the politiques on the other is no more than another critical device intended to sort out after a fashion the complexities of a highly intricate literary milieu. The notion of "Literary Paris 1934-1939" presents an arithmetic problem more complex than the (albeit important) political equation can suggest, for it possessed a geometry characterised by a curve that swept generously from the almost mythical constants of previous decades (Paul Claudel, Henri Bergson or Paul Valéry) to the heralds of a new age, to Sartre and to Natalie Sarraute, whose Tropisme appeared in 1938. Even if one takes into account the important common denominator of a highly political atmosphere, even if one keeps in mind the common feeling of unease and the pressing immediacy of political and economic issues, French literature in these years offers anything but a clear and distinct profile, as the individual writers' response to the condition of man between the wars was anything but uniform, on the contrary.

Having said that, one hastens to add that there did exist certain categories under which this author or that might be found most frequently. The comprehensive catalogue of the Paris-Paris exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 1981, for instance, subsumed under the heading Nouvelle Revue Française Valéry, Gide, Adrienne Monnier, Claudel, Saint-John Perse, Gaston Gallimard, Marcel Jouhandeau, and Jean Paulhan. Nevertheless, a glance at any one number of the Nouvelle Revue Francaise will show that it was in fact a veritable index of everything that was important in French thought and letters at the time, will show that the "Situation" (Grigson) was characterised by multiformity, change and contradiction.

There was room for many points of view in the Nouvelle Revue Française, just as there was room at Gallimard for Drieu La Rochelle's book Socialisme fasciste in 1934, sandwiched between Malraux's La Conditione humanine ("Man's Fate") in 1933 and Le Temps du mépris in 1935.(WiP.33)

The curve reached easily from a pre-Marxist Sartre describing in La Nausée the sense of existential disgust, the crisis of humanistic ideals and the resignation typical of the period before the actual outbreak of the war in France, all the way to Malraux's L'Espoir with its optimistic belief in revolutionary ideals and personal action. It was a time of turmoil, of fear, of expectation, of fragmentation and antithesis.

We do, however, possess one criterion for ordering this multitudinous profusion, and that is the extent to which any of the various authors and groups can be shown to connect with the interests and concerns of the writers prominent among the contributors to the Booster. The following chapter will therefore open with an impressionistic sketch of the Villa Seurat's association with the protagonists of the native literary scene. For contrary to the notion that the Anglo-American visitors to Paris had little or no knowledge of French life and culture, the inhabitants of the Villa Seurat seem to have been quite aware of contemporary French letters and actually knew quite a number of writers, editors and publishers personally. To trace out roughly some of these connecting strands a number of writers will be introduced, by way of example, whom the Villa Seurat group were either acquainted with or admired (Céline, Cendrars, Artaud, Queneau). This chapter does not propose to offer a comprehensive survey of French literature at the time, nor do all French writers with whom the Villa Seurat habitués were acquainted appear here. The next chapter, for instance, "Surrealism and the Villa Seurat 1937-1939" might have been a part of this one; however, its splitting off seems justifiable because of surrealism's overwhelming importance in the international art world in the decades between the wars.

We have already spoken of Miller's enthusiasm for France. Even before coming to Paris in 1930 he had read (in translation) books by Huysmans, Balzac, Cendrars, Gide, Proust, Flaubert, Maupassant, Anatole France, Gautier, Paul Morand, Maeterlinck and Elie Faure. In his own eclectic way he was deeply interested in French literature. In the year 1932 numerous French writers were among the people he hoped to get to know (as he said in a letter to Frank Dobo), Duhamel, Cocteau, Gide, Morand, Henri Duvernois, Cendrars, Colette, and Elie Faure(2). And among the ten books he listed for the Gotham Book Mart catalogue We Moderns towards the end of the 1930s were five by French writers, by Breton, Balzac, Romain Rolland, Céline and Gide (NMHM.38).

Gide, the celebrated president of the IWA, whose journals were being serially published in these years, was praised in Miller's letters to Anais Nin for his book on Dostoievski(3). At a Cahiers du Sud dinner David Gascoyne saw Paul Valéry, "looking rather like an old white horse", as well as Léon Paul Fargue, "the quintessential café-goer" and pedestrian of Paris who sometimes accompanied Brassai on his nocturnal escapades(4). Gascoyne also saw the poet, novelist and playwright Jules Supervielle, whom Anais Nin had met in late 1935 (AN.ii.64f). Some years earlier she had become acquainted with Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the adventurous author of Vol de Nuit and Le Petit Prince (AN.i.178). André Maurois contributed to the subscription list got up by Henry Miller for the publication of the diary Anais Nin had kept as a child, which was to be issued in 1937-38 (AN.ii.270). The child-diary was brought to Jean Paulhan and Bernard Groethuysen of the Nouvelle Revue Française:

> Henry had come before me with his "essay" on the diary and his exuberant speeches. Mr.Grottiesen said: "We must study this diary, what it really is, for of course, in Mr.Miller's essay there is a lot of Mr.Miller, all about the whale, for instance." (AN.ii.262)

Conrad Moricand, a close friend of the poet Max Jacob, was acquainted with Francis Carco, Pierre Mac Orlan, Louis Jouvet, Henri Michaux and Blaise Cendrars(5). In 1932 Miller was almost commisioned to translate a series of lectures for the cosmopolitan Paul Morand, and in Big Sur he described his meeting with Charles Albert Cingria. By 1936, as he wrote to Lawrence Durrell, he had "made every important French review

now excepting Mercure de France, which is about on a par with the Criterion"(Corr.46). He could advise Durrell: "For Jacques Levesque the maddest stuff you've got"(Corr.31). Levesque was the editor of Orbes, a small dadaistic review, which had issued the very first critique of Cancer (Paris 174). What is more, Miller himself became one of the editors of a new and reputable French magazine called Volontés. In A Devil in Paradise he wrote about a banquet given by its sponsors; among those present were some of the other editors, who included Raymond Queneau, Georges Pelorson and Transition's Eugene Jolas (DiP.12f). As we have noted above, Perlès' Sentiments Limitrophes was praised by Roger Martin du Gard, the Nobel Prize winner for literature of 1937. His Les Thibaults David Gascoyne hoped to be able to translate with Joyce's friend and commentator Stuart Gilbert. In December 1936 Miller recommended to Durrell an essay by that ingeniously versatile dilettante, Jean Cocteau, whse name also appeared on the list of supporters of Durrell's abortive anti-censorship campaign(6). David Gascoyne descibed a tumultuous visit to the Ambassadeurs theatre with his friend Denham Fouts (clad only in a pair of pyjamas) to see the last act of Les Parents Terribles. In Jean Marais' dressing room they were received by Cocteau,

> with, at first, puzzled surprise, and then, after a moment, with the most charming understanding. 'Mais naturellement', he assured us, la pièce était écrite pour être vue en pyjama!' (DG.ii.111)

Cocteau's fantasies, his world of "drugs, insane asylums, House of the Dead", his films, these fascinated Anais Nin as well and in November 1937 she noted as one of her aims: "I want to do Jeanne and her brothers better than Cocteau did the Enfants Terribles"(7). Across the notebooks and diaries of the Villa Seurat habitués flit the names of dozens of contemporary French writers: Romain Rolland, Denis de Rougemont, Colette, the popular novelist of former decades, Marcel Jouhandeau, prolific and egotistical (a favorite of David Gascoyne), a host of poets such as Patrice de la Tour du Pin, Audiberti, Saint-Jean Perse, the novelists Francois Mauriac, Julien Green, Alain-Fournier, Georges Duhamel and Jules Romains, the playwrights Jean Giraudoux and Jean Anouilh. And there was that host of ex-surrealists, many of whom were acquaintances of David Gascoyne, Brassai and the other members of

the Villa Seurat group: these (not all poets, to be sure) included Philippe Soupault who once said of David Gascoyne that he "is not an English poet, he is a French poet writing in English"(KRDAS.49). They also included Robert Desnos, Jacques Prévert, Roger Vitrac, Ribemont-Dessaignes, André Masson, Jacques Baron, Marcel Duhamel and Georges Sadoul. Louis Aragon, who had become the Communist Party's poet laureate, was mentioned, as well as Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, his reactionary counterpart.

Though clearly the above draft is anything but comprehensive, it is clear that in the years preceding the war there existed a plethora of tendencies all pulling in different directions, and the Villa Seurat was not at all detached from this pulling and shoving. What is more, many of the contradictory tendencies were to be found in the individual writers themselves, and again the Villa Seurat writers were no exception (at least some were not). A purist like Louis Aragon found it difficult to understand how Malraux could publish the first sections of his Psychologie de l'Art in the glossy art review Verve just after he had finished one of the major books about the Spanish War (Paris 333). Herbert Lottman notes about Malraux:

> André and Lucie Chamson watched him fly off in February 1934, when all his friends were mobilizing their strengths and skill to keep Fascism out of France, to seek the legendary capital of the Queen of Sheba in the deserts of Arabia, an irrelevant adventure sponsored by a popular daily newspaper.(WiP.99)

A later collaborator, Henry de Montherlant, wrote both for reactionary and for left-wing papers, maintaining that in this way everybody was kept happy (TCFL.91). And David Gascoyne did not hesitate to quote in his journal in February 1938 some lines from the fascist dandy Pierre Drieu la Rochelle (DG.ii.34). Marcel Jouhandeau, another anti-semite and author of "scurrilous contributions to Je Suis Partout and L'Action Francaise, could be at the same time a pillar of La Nouvelle Revue Francaise"(WiP.73). Many felt as André Gide, who said that Jouhandeau had transported him into regions and new depths of consciousness that he had not known before (TCFL.71). And David Gascoyne remarked in 1938 about Algèbre des Valeurs:

It is for me one of those books whose importance for oneself one realizes at first glance, which almost make one feel one is familiar with them already, so close is one's sympathy with the author's thoughts. (DG.ii.97)

The reception of Céline's work was similarly ambiguous. His Voyage au bout de la nuit and Mort à crédit were universally celebrated in the years before the war. Crying out with intensity and open horror, with the terrible awareness of a meaningless world, they not only articulated the gnawing sense of nihilism which underlay that changeful decade, they also anticipated the moral and transcendental vacuum, the brutal absurdity of human existence which was to characterise post-war experience, as manifest in the work of Camus, Sartre, Beckett and others. The strange and horrible beauty of Céline's books also led many to play down his own hysterical political activism in these years, his virulent anti-semitism, his gross tract Bagatelles pour un massacre (1937), according to Herbert Lottman, one of "the two most famous anti-Semitic literary works of the time" (WiP.161) and L'Ecole des Cadavres (1938). Indeed, it is not easy to find an answer to the question why a foremost explorer of consciousness and the word, like Céline, a most pertinent critic of a petrified society, lent his support to the fascist cause. But though the two poles, his novels and his political tracts, might seem contradictory, as the critic Julia Kristeva rightly pointed out, they also had their common roots in a radically pessimistic outlook. In the 1930s this bipolarity was less apparent than after Céline grossly collaborated with the Germans during the years of the Occupation (he was sentenced to death for high treason in 1944). But, contrary to what apologists suggested, the anti-democratic impulse and hysterical anti-semitism, these were already there, even before the pernicious Bagatelles. As Herbert Lottman pointed out, Céline's reputation at this time was saved largely by "public indifference to his minor works" (WiP.74). The metamorphosis of an initially almost harlequinesque hatred for civilisation (like that of the Boosters) into fascist pamphleteering did not come overnight (FJR.170). But many, it seems, simply ignored his earlier political tracts, and even in 1936, three years after he had written an anti-semitic play entitled L'Eglise, Louis Aragon still tried to win him for the Party. In 1936 Aragon translated the Voyage into Russian (a book which had first been

celebrated in an enthusiastic essay by the reactionary Léon Daudet in L'Action Francaise) and Céline visited the Soviet Union(8). Still, one wonders why it was from L'Eglise, that Sartre took the epigram for La Nausée. Nevertheless, one should not forget that Céline, though an extreme case, may have been closer to the spirit of the age than usually assumed, for Fritz Raddatz has quoted the vehemently anti-semitic Lucien Rebatet of Je Suis Partout as saying that whether communist or royalist, eighty percent of all thinking Parisians were anti-semites in the years before the war... (FJR.158) .

Like the author of La Nausée, Céline was one of the few "solitary souls" who, in the pre-war decade, according to Herbert Lottman, actually produced "enduring literature"(9). And indeed, despite his insane Bagatelles pour in massacre, despite the fact that during the Occupation Céline called for the extermination of the Jews and protested that collaboration with the Germans to this effect was deficient, despite the fact that, as Herbert Lottman says, any serious contemplation of his life and work confirms that "he was an evil genius and a deranged personality"(WiP.172), Céline remained one of the writers who Miller admired and continued to admire without reserve. After reading Death on the Installment Plan in 1942 Miller, quite in the tradition of the Booster's ostentatious amorality, wrote to Durrell:

> Still the best writer alive today, I do think. After they defeat the Axis powers they will have to lick Céline, it seems to me. He's got more dynamite in him than Hitler ever had. It's permanent hatred - for the whole human species. But what merrymaking.(Corr.177)

For several years Miller lived just around the corner from the rue Fanny policlinique, where Céline (whose real names was Destouches) generously and conscientiously treated his impoverished patients until, antagonised by the tract Mea Culpa which described his journey to and disillusionment with the Soviet Union, the Clichy municipal authorities, mostly communists, finally sacked him. Miller and the Frenchman never met. Even before moving to Clichy in 1932, "the American Céline", as Cyril Connolly called Miller in a review of January 1936 (CCCP.18), had read Voyage au bout de la nuit. Frank Dobo, a literary agent, who was a friend of Brassai and knew Céline's publisher Denoel, showed to several acquaintances the galley-proofs of an

explosive book by an unknown author. This was in 1931. The book was Voyage au bout de la nuit and Miller was among those who read it before it was published in November 1932. He was thrilled and Dobo, who hardly knew Miller but sensed an affinity with Céline, tried to arrange a meeting. Céline, however, a paranoiac, intensely private person, was deeply suspicious and in particular hated all intellectuals, the "hommes des lettres". Dobo's efforts to convince him that Miller had little in common with these failed. Once Tropic of Cancer was out, however, Miller immediately sent a copy to Céline, who replied by return of post. In this note, which survives, he congratulated his confrère. A letter to Roger Klein by Miller was accompanied by a copy of Céline's lines(10). Miller was puzzled by the advice which the Frenchman offered:

SOIGNEZ BIEN VOTRE INDISCRÉTION. TOUJOURS PLUS DE DISCRÉTION! SACHEZ AVOIR TORT - le monde est rempli de gens qui on raison - c'est pour cela qu'il ÉCOEURE! (HMGN.134)

More important for Miller's work than this counsel, which Brassai (and Pascal Pia) considered a key to Céline's own tragic biography was the example of his ferocious anti-literature, his demotic staccato, his rebellious denunciations, the lucid sketches of leprous cityscapes and cancerous civilisation, the compulsive mixture of comedy and vituperation, of grotesque exhibitionism and aggressive garrulousness, of blackest realism and hallucinatory distortion. All these, mixed with Céline's extreme self-centredness, iconoclastic impulse, cultural pessimism and anarchism, influenced or confirmed what Miller felt at the time. As George Wickes said of Céline's first book:

Not only the Spenglarian sense of doom is there, but the very idiom and tone, the picaresque narrative and the gallows humour that Miller adopted. Céline's Voyage is another episodic autobiographical novel that dwells on all that is vicious, treacherous, sadistic, obscene, diseased, and repulsive in human nature. (AiP.259)

Céline's book anticipated much of what came to be regarded as characteristic of Cancer, and at least one critic felt that the latter was no more than "a second rate imitation of 'Journey to the End of the Night'" (WRMC.7W). It seems more than likely that in one of his numerous revisions (at least three from 1932 to 1934) Miller did re-

work in the light of Voyage the typescript of Cancer. But, as George Wickes has pointed out, Miller's early correspondence with Emil Schnellock already revealed many of the marks of the later Cancer. Nevertheless, to belittle the influence of Céline's splendid outcry by claiming that "Miller found his style and subject before he had ever heard of Céline", and that this was "simply another case of two writers responding to their time and place with the same perceptions" (AiP.260), seems as inappropriate as the derisive remarks of Waverly Root who said: "I preferred to take my Céline straight" (WRMC.7W).

Very early in the day the reference to Céline became a part of the standard repertoire of critics reviewing Henry Miller. Anais Nin may well have been the first to do this. In her preface to Cancer she said that it would be a misunderstanding to read Miller's wildly lyrical and wholly naked book with the same eyes with which one read Lawrence, Breton, Joyce and Céline. And as early as September 1936 David Gascoyne noted "Henry Miller is probably a little tired of being compared with Fernand Celine"(Comment.ii.39.87). He then (naturally) went on to compare the two perceptively himself. In "Inside the Whale", Orwell remarked that Céline's Voyage au bout de la nuit was a protest "against the horror and meaninglessness of modern life - actually, indeed, of life", but that Tropic of Cancer was "almost exactly the opposite", as it was "the book of a man who is happy"(CE.i.546). We will return to this crucial difference in later chapters, especially when dealing with the Booster editorials. What Orwell said, namely that Miller's "real affinity" was not with Céline but with Whitman, was in fact anticipated by Connolly who detected "Whitmanesque optimism" in Cancer (CCCP.118). And even David Gascoyne who claimed that Miller and Céline shared "the same unbounded pessimism" saw that Miller "has not, however, the same acid and relentless biterness as Celine, and is not in the least inhuman" (Comment.ii.39.87f).

Miller admired Céline, like Wyndham Lewis, "as a permanent enemy of the people"(Corr.30). Closer to his own, essentially life-affirming boisterousness, however, was another writer: the Swiss-French writer Blaise Cendrars. According to Perlès "the most extraordinary chap who ever stepped from the jungle to the forefront of French literature" (MFHM.155), Cendrars was the first man to review Tropic of Cancer. His

article which began: "Un écrivain américain nous est né" was published in Jacques Levesque's Orbes on January 1st 1935 (FJTHM.73f). Ever since Miller first came across his novels in America, Cendrars had been one of his heroes, and the American, who in his early days in Paris had begun translating Moravagine with the help of Perlès, was deeply touched when one afternoon in December 1934 the almost legendary figure came to visit him in the Villa Seurat. A splendid evening followed. Accompanied by Perlès (who described this meeting in My Friend Henry Miller), Miller and Cendrars went off to have a great meal of lobster, oysters and pigeons in the Restaurant des Fleurs on the rue des Abbesses, and then toured the bars on the boulevard in Montmartre. Much to his own annoyance, as he wrote to Anais Nin shortly after, Miller was almost speechless, somewhat intimidated by the great adventurer with the booming voice. "Cendrars never sounded casual because everything about him was momentous" said Perlès (MFHM.153). He offered his help, saying he might even translate Cancer himself. Miller was overwhelmed, sensing that he had found "in Cendrars a sort of cosmic brother", as Perlès put it. Indeed, if ever there was a person whom Miller admired both as an artist and as a man it was Cendrars(11). No contemporary author, Miller once told Brassai, except John Cowper Powys and Céline had given him as much as this giant, adventurer and poet, beside whom Miller felt his own life drab and uneventful. "His life reads like the Arabian Nights' Entertainment"(BiML.68)

"Cendrars is a voyager" (T'ien Hsia.vii.4.351) and his voyages had taken him across the face of the earth. Returned from the trenches of the Great War with one arm missing, he had travelled in the deepest Amazonian jungles, had sailed before the mast, journeyed across the wastes of Siberia, in China and India and in Africa. He had studied medicine in Bern, been a journalist, produced films, lived as a bee-keeper near Paris, as a juggler in London, and published Les Chants du Maldoror (Schmiele 110). He contributed (along with Tzara, Huelsenbeck, Ball, Apollinaire and Marinetti) to the review Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, "invented his own poetry of the modern city, celebrating the noisy confusion of streets, subways, cars, and factories"(AiP.99), had translated, as Robert McAlmon pointed out, "a book of primitive Negro songs and poems" in the early 1920s, brought to various Paris-American

parties "explorers, scientists, and anthropologists"(BGT.111), mingled with Picabia, Léger, Satie, Brancusi and other experimentalists of the modern 1920s. As George Wickes pointed out:

> Along with Apollinaire, he liberated poetry of punctuation, thereby creating the fluid unstopped line that runs through so much modern verse. He developed a flexible prose poetry, written in shifting meters and forms, organized casually, almost haphazardly. (AiP.99)

Like few others, it seems, Cendrars with his appreciation of popular culture, his directing "an open mind toward unlikely sources of poetry", his literary collages, inserting incongruous material (like a pamphlet of the Denver Chamber of Commerce) into his poetry (AiP.99), influenced the John Dos Passos of 1919. The American translated several of his longer poems (Panama) and wrote a tribute to him in 1926 (AiP.99). Miller too learned from Cendrars, especially to allow free rein to imagination, to memory, to improvisation and to follow his every impulse (HMRH.41f). But it was not only here that Miller was influenced by Cendrars. As we have noted, he wrote to Fraenkel that it was the author of Moravagine, a work invoking as a motive force of the human world bestiality, insanity and the will to destruction and death, who had sung about the 'death motif' long before he or Lowenfels had done so (Hamlet 206).

More than anything else, however, it was the man Cendrars, a paradigm of energy and abundance of life, manifest in his infinite inquisitiveness and unending restlessness, who fascinated Miller. Cendrars, Perlès has said, was a free man, and this "essential trait" he shared with Henry Miller:

> They have no desire to improve the world; they share the Oriental view that to do good may often work ill. Nor do they believe in political revolutions. 'Moi, je me révolutionne tous les jours' says Cendrars. Their freedom springs from an inner liberation - a liberation that must be re-enacted every day.(MFHM.155)

Cendrars, the friend of Apollinaire, of the unknown Charlie Chaplin and of Caruso, was, as Miller put it, "an adventurer in all realms of life"(BiML.68). As few others, it seems, Cendrars understood Tropic of Cancer, and Miller wrote of their first encounter: "What I liked

principally in all he said was his realization that I knew the streets intimately" (LtAN.170).

In the years which followed Miller and Cendrars met occasionally and became "great friends", as Perlès wrote (MFHM.151). In A Devil in Paradise Miller recalls mentioning to Cendrars in 1938 that he was seeing his old friend Moricand, the astrologer. This was a mistake. Before slamming the door shut, Cendrars said: "Moricand?...Ce n'est pas un ami. C'est un cadavre vivant"(DiP.124). But Miller and Cendrars remained friends: he was the last acquaintance Miller met before he left Paris in May 1939. Cendrars was pleased, almost embarrassed, by Miller's highly appreciative "Tribute to Blaise Cendrars" that had appeared in the T'ien Hsia Monthly some months before, a eulogy which at one point says that Cendrars was "the man that D.H.Lawrence would like to have been"(T'ien Hsia.vii.4.352). Cendrars (unlike the author of Mort à Crédit) was perhaps one of the men Henry Miller would like to have been:

> The reason I always think of Cendrars with affection and admiration is because he resembles so closely that Chinese rock-bottom man of my imagination whom I have probably invented because of my hatred and contempt for the men I see about me in the world to-day. ... Cendrars anchors himself in the very heart of things. He is the most active of men and yet serene as a lama. To bemoan the contradictoriness of his nature is to misjudge him. The man is all of a piece, one inexhaustible creative substance which enjoys a continuous fulfilment through giving. ... He is a vital force, a blind and pitiless urge, closer to nature than to man. He is tender and ruthless at the same time. He is antinomian. And always uniquely himself, always uniquely Blaise Cendrars. (T'ien Hsia.vii.4.350)

"The Dôme at nine in the morning", Anais Nin observed one day in the Booster summer of 1937: "Antonin Artaud passes by. He is waving his magic Mexican cane and shouting"(AN.ii.238). Artaud had just returned from Mexico. Shortly afterwards he travelled to Ireland, but was soon expelled from the country. He was showing marked symptoms of psychic disorder, and by the time Le Théâtre et son double appeared in February 1938 the famous actor, set-designer, poet, director and theatre theoretician was interned in St.Anne, evidently not for the first time, as some years before Miller had noted with admiration that Artaud "in manic-depressive fashion" had written L'Art et la mort

(1929) "in a padded cell for which he pays no rent and no taxes"(Hamlet 19). For the Villa Seurat, but especially for Anais Nin, Artaud was the epitome of the suffering artist, the crucified genius in the prophetic role.

In 1922 Artaud had sent his first poems to the Nouvelle Revue Française. They were rejected. In 1924 Artaud joined the surrealist group but was ejected in 1927. The charge against him was "calumnious disloyalty" (as Gascoyne put it in his Short Survey of Surrealism) (DGSS.83), as well as "commercialism". For Artaud had founded in 1926 the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, where his new concept of theatre slowly materialised. Though his own productions were not successes, his ideas on the Theatre of Cruelty caused some stir, but really influenced only later generations of dramatists, such as Ionescu, Tardieu, Genet, Beckett and others. From 1931 on, Artaud began formulating his ideas in a number of articles in the NRF, in various lectures, manifestos and letters (mostly to Jean Paulhan). These were collected from 1935 on and finally published in Le Théâtre et son double.

Artaud's point of departure was the conviction that occidental thought had developed in a direction inimical to spontaneous and immediate expression of human existence, of essential metaphysical concerns. Influenced by Oriental traditions (Balinese theatre performance in Paris in 1931), the renegade surrealist rejected a 'literary' theatrical tradition, demanding instead total theatre that involved the spectator directly. Theatre was not literature, said Artaud, who believed that "no one had ever felt more keenly the inadequacy of language" than he himself (AN.i.208), theatre was more than text, had to be liberated from language's domination. Artaud denied categorically the appeal to rational faculties (like Brecht's epic theatre). He strove to reaffirm the expressive possibilities of theatre which lay beyond the spoken word. Ritual gestures, masks, rhythmic movements, dance, chanting, screams, penetrating sound collages, monstrous puppets and effigies of odd proportions, spatial lighting, specially intoned words that take on the meanings they have in dreams, these were to fuse together to form the new corporeal language of theatre. This extended use of new theatrical techniques was to enrich the almost hieroglyphic system which Artaud had in mind, and which the

audience might read as chiffres, as symbols of inner states. The aim was to awaken (AN.i.201). By confronting the viewer violently with reflections of his own subjective depths, by conjuring up in dream-like language the brutality and crime hidden in the unconscious, the wild erotic desires and ecstacies, he was forced "into a poetic state"(AN.i.201). Using these elements of cruelty (a term that was viewed philosophically as a cosmic relentlessness, a merciless and absolute determination governing the world and creation) to harrass the viewer almost physically, the audience was to be thrust into a magical and religious experience, a mythical sphere which was believed to be quite original to the theatre. "No talking. No Analysis", said Anais Nin: "Contagion by acting ecstatic states. No objective stage, but a ritual at the center of the audience." (AN.i.195).

On the sixth of April 1933 Artaud gave a lecture in the Sorbonne. Among those present were Artaud's former psychoanalyst René Allendy, Brassai, Miller and Anais Nin (HMGN.155). The title of the lecture, later included in Le Théâtre et son double was 'Le Théâtre et la peste". In this lecture, performance rather, Artaud's ideas were glaringly put into practice when suddenly he appeared to have forgotten about his text and began acting out, embodying a man who was dying of plague, reaching a pitch of pain and anguish in his expression which unnerved the audience:

His face was contorted with anguish, one could see the perspiration dampening his hair. His eyes dilated, his muscles became cramped, his fingers struggled to retain their flexibility. He made one feel the parched and burnng throat, the pains, the fever, the fire in the guts. He was in agony. He was screaming. He was delirious. He was enacting his own death, his own crucifixion. (AN.i.200)

The audience gasped, then laughed and hissed and left. When Artaud later walked into the night with Anais Nin he remarked angrily:

They always want to hear about; they want to hear an objective conference on 'The Theatre and the Plague', and I want to give them the experience itself, the plague itself, so they will be terrified, and awaken. I want to awaken them. (AN.i.201)

Kenneth Rexroth once said that the French authors who most resembled Henry Miller were Francis Carco, Mac Orlan, Cendrars and "Antonin Artaud, if he weren't crazy"(KRBiB.161). And indeed, Artaud, as Martin Esslin describes him, was very close to Miller and the other Boosters.

> Like Bergson, Shaw or Nietzsche Artaud was a Romantic vitalist, a believer in the healing power of the life force, the power of man's natural instinct as against dry-as-dust rationalism, logical reasoning based on linguistic subtlety. He supported the heart against the head, the body and its emotions against the rarified abstractions of the mind. (Esslin 80)

Artaud's emphasis on the revelatory power of suffering, of cruelty, pain and death, his belief in non-rational, more immediate means of communication, his concentration on highly subjective states of consciousness and mythical areas, his turning to Oriental forms and meanings, as well as his uncompromising personal resolve to explore the borderline of consciousness (whether in the peyotl rites among the Mexican Indians or in his researches into the great plague), these appealed to the editors of the Booster, and his programmatic rejection of any distinction between 'art' and 'life', between theatre and reality was paralleled by Miller's insistence that the protagonist of his books was no fiction but simply himself. But, as with Céline, the interest of the Boosters in Artaud was ultimately limited, for Artaud was a tortured and twisted individual, a sufferer who would insist on his role, on the artist's role as a sufferer, a victim, a scapegoat to an extent that neither Miller nor Durrell nor Perlès were willing to accept.

Anais Nin, who met him in March 1933 through Allendy, spoke of "his excessive sensitivity, impressionability, his incapacity to enjoy" (AN.i.208). Everything, she said was "filtered through pain, exacerbated nerves"(AN.i.208). But she also saw his genius and (for a while) she wanted to help. "It is the darkness, the bitterness in Artaud I want to heat", she said, adding: "Physically I could not touch him, but the flame and genius in him I love" (AN.i. 232).

In her journal the entries of the spring and summer months of 1933 abound with descriptions of meetings with Artaud, long excerpts from his letters to her. She had read Artaud's important letters to Jacques Rivière before their first encounter, and immediately sensed some sort of correpondence between his L'Art et la mort and her House of Incest, a copy of which she presented to him. Artaud told her:

> One thing which amazes me, judging from the manuscript which you gave me, House of Incest, you seem to have an awareness of subtle states, almost secret ones, which I have only felt at the cost of enormous suffering which I do not seek out. I am very curious to know by what science you reach the core of psychic states. (AN.i.206)

Their relationship lasted until August 1933. After a period of intense mutual exchange on topics ranging from "the kabala, magic, myths, legends"(AN.i.196) to psychoanalysis and the fears that obsessed them, from their romantic prediliction for the sense of ritual to his work on Heliogabulus, which he wanted to dedicate to her, Artaud, like a drowning man, reached out for the love of the young woman. "With you I might return from the abysses in which I have lived"(AN.i.243). But it was in vain. They parted, Artaud full of bitter disappointment, Anais Nin relieved. She did not, however, cease admiring him as "the poet who walks inside my dreams"(AN.i.244), and two years later she still observed that the "big themes" of the many discussions on art and literature which were not recorded in her diary might be found in the books of Spengler, Breton, Denis Seurat and of Antonin Artaud (AN.ii.50). When in January 1938, news spread around the Left Bank cafés that Artaud was interned, Anais Nin told a man at the next table, who was mocking "the mystical poet", as she had once called him: "It is you who should be locked up and not Artaud" (AN.ii.285). Artaud remained a preoccupation, and the 1941 journal records her attempt to portray the disturbed poet, her difficulties at rendering the emotional reality of the onset of his insanity. Glancing through her 1937 diary, however, she chanced upon a short account of her visit to the Ile St. Louis psychiatric ward:

I was struck by the resemblance in style, in repetition, in imagery and hallucinations, between a schizophrenic patient and the talk of Artaud. This could have been the language and even the content of Artaud's madness. (AN.iii.184)

That diary entry thus became the second part of her Artaud portrait "Je suis le plus malade des surréalistes". Four years earlier, however, it had been published independently as "Le Merle Blanc" - in the first Villa Seurat Booster.

If the work of Artaud was misunderstood and abused by many of his contemporaries, recognition came early for Raymond Queneau, whose experimental prose and linguistic theories led the French novel straight from the flagging surrealist enterprise across Sartre's La Nausée to the nouveau roman(11).

Like Artaud, Queneau, who had studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in the early 1920s, belonged for a while to the surrealist group, working for the movement's organ La Révolution Surréaliste. In 1929 he left Breton for personal reasons. On a journey to Greece in 1932 he began his first novel Le Chiendent which appeared in 1933. A year later Geule de Pierre came out. An excerpt of this book was his contribution to the Booster, 'Les Poissons'. Queneau was active in countless literary projects and enterprises (Paris 354). Living in the middle of Saint Germain des Prés, he had excellent connections with the world of publishing and with literary and philosophical circles. He worked for the newspaper L'Intransigéant from 1936 to 1938 where he was responsible for the column "Connaissez-vous Paris?". Subsequently he was taken on as an editor (later, as chief reader) of Gallimard, the most important publisher of the day.

Queneau's energetic interests spanned many fields. He wrote novels and poems, produced literary and art criticism, composed essays, translated from English into French (including Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here (1937)), wrote scripts for film and radio broadcasts, as well as chansons. His main concern, however, centred on problems of language, in particular on the contemporary state of his mother tongue: highly conscious of the catastrophic disparity between written French (with its dried-up roots in eighteenth-century ideals of style)

and a lively vernacular, Queneau's efforts were directed at a linguistic revival. Such an innovation, a shedding of the shackles of dead convention, he felt, was a prerequisite for a new revitalized literature, a fresh popular language such as was created by Dante, Luther, Rabelais or Montaigne. Though (unlike, for instance, Céline or Ionesco) his ouevre was an experiment in language based on a sound foundation of theory - he attended Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel in the 'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes' and was alive to specialist linguistic literature - an acute and entirely impertinent sense of play and of humour, combined with a certain penchant for the unsystematic and inconsistent (he never wrote a whole book in his "néo-francais") saved his work from dogmatism or zealotry (Gülich 255f). In point of fact, some commentators (such as Jacques Prévert) felt that the chief problem with interpreting Queneau was whether to take him seriously or not (Gülich 257).

His enquiry into language stemmed from doubts about the possibility of rational communication, doubts which, as we have seen, plagued many of his contemporaries and not only Céline and Artaud (Gülich 248). His solution differed from theirs in that he aimed at a renewal and enrichment of language, rather than its eventual silencing or reduction to a staccato of angry spurts of sound. Thus for his "néo-francais", he not only rigorously tapped the vernacular, Parisian argot in particular, which he presented in phonetic orthography. He also set about making the language richer and more complex by other means. Diversifying techniques were employed, word-plays, listings (reminiscent of the surrealists and of Miller), neologism, the use of scholarly, technical or archaic words; grammatical convention was ignored and literary and philosophical allusion and parody abounded. His exemplars were Joyce and Faulkner rather than the surrealists under whose aegis his carreer had begun; for the surrealists' <u>écriture automatique</u> with its denial of conscious composition entirely contravened his liking for form and construction. Queneau was deeply interested in mathematics, and his work is eloquent of this fascination: <u>Chiendent</u> for instance consisted of seven chapters, the 13th and the last section of each of them standing outside the actual plot (Gülich 243f). He experimented a great deal with narrative forms and techniques, including forms of multiple perspective, which Unanumo and Pirandello had used before him

and which Durrell was later to popularise in the Alexandria Quartet (Gülich 242). His Exercises de style, in which he tells the same banal story in 99 variations, brought him literary reknown, as did Cent mille milliards de poèmes, a collection of ten sonnets, bound and cut in such a way that each line may be combined with every other line: this meant that the number of possible combinations was 10 to the power of fourteen. Like Rabelais and like Joyce, Queneau juggled playfully with language, and with the encyclopaedic vocabulary and wide knowledge at his disposal. Understandably he later became one of the editors of the Encyclopédie de la Pléiade...

It was possibly through Brassai or Frank Dobo that Miller met Queneau in 1934 (WRHMAN.7W). It is also possible that they met in the Hôtel des Terrasses where both Brassai and Queneau lived for a time along with the Hungarian photographer, Hans Reichel, Robert Desnos, Henri Michaux and Louis Tihanyi (FMHR.3). During one of their first meetings, according to a letter to Anais Nin, they talked about Joyce, or rather about Miller's "The World Of Death", a chapter on Joyce and Proust from his work on D.H.Lawrence. It was, as Miller wrote, a "good talk in which we understood one another clearly"(LtAN.168). Queneau said that the projected Lawrence book would have no difficulty in finding a publisher. Naturally, Miller thought the young Frenchman's literary connections might be useful, but there were other reasons for their understanding as well. It is true that Chiendent, a rigorously wrought artifice would have appealed far more to Durrell's sense of form than to the eruptive, expressionistic Miller. But in the 1930s at least there was also that common penchant for the surrealistic, for in the work of Queneau, who "never quite ceased being a Surrealist writer" (WRHMAN.7W), the borderline between dream and reality was also frequently difficult to define (Jülich 238). And there was a common admiration for writers like Rabelais or Spengler, as well as the conviction that what mattered was not man the social animal and but the home moyen sensuel in his daily life on the streets, in cafés or in the metro. And certainly the belief in the vernacular, in the power of street language, brought them together (Gülich 238). Queneau may have sensed immediately what Orwell later said about Miller: "The callous coarseness with which the characters in Tropic of Cancer talk is very rare in fiction, but it is extremely common in real life"(CE.i.545).

Like Queneau's, by the mid-1930s Miller's muscular argot had become a conscious literary stance; in late 1934, according to Brassai, he felt the desire to see New York again, to hear New York again, to recharge his vocabulary (HMGN.221f). "He attacks my lack of interest in slang", Anais Nin observed in her diary in the summer of 1937 (AN.ii.216).

Queneau and the American became friends, collaborators even. We have mentioned that Cancer and Black Spring were reviewed by the Frenchman in the Nouvelle Revue Française in 1936. Queneau, who himself translated some of Miller's shorter prose pieces, was probably also responsible for the occasional note on the American's work in the Nouvelle Revue Française. And at his instigation, as we have also noted, Miller became one of the editors of Volontés which issued a number of his stories and essays in translation:

> Acceptance by French writers was meaningful to Miller, since, with his books banned in English-speaking countries, he received very little public notice from his countrymen and had to look for his main support to the literati of his adopted nation. (Martin 329)

Though perhaps not quite to the degree which Jay Martin's remark suggests, acceptance by French writers was important to Miller, and the later author of Zazie dans le métro was most important for this reason.

One of Queneau's many fields of interest before the war was the Collège de Sociologie. The Collège was an apparently secret society founded by Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, Roger Callois and others. A successor to Contre-Attaque, a more politically oriented grouping around Breton and Bataille (1935), the Collège proposed to study the existence of modern man according to a new religious sociology. The emphasis was on the 'religious' as the titles of Callois' books, born of the milieu of the Collège, Le Mythe et l'homme (1938) and L'Homme et le sacré (1938) suggest. Gatherings were held in the bookshop 'Aux Galéries du livre' and visitors and lecturers included Michel Leiris, Alexandre Kojève, Walter Benjamin and Jean Paulhan. David Gascoyne, apparently familiar with the ideas and activities of the Collège, described his first meeting with Roger Callois at the dinner given by the Cahiers du Sud in November 1938

which we have referred to above:

> Talked to him chiefly about Mass Observation and Charles Madge, of whom he reminds me a lot, both in appearance and because of his ideas. There ought to be a rapprochement between Mass Observation and the Collège de Sociologie. (DG.ii.90f)

But Mass Observation, which had originally been conceived by Madge "as a technique for recording the sublimal stirrings of the collective mind of the nation"(KRDAS.47), was already well beyond its zenith and really beyond Gascoyne's interest as well (DG.i.11). And the Collège, too, was about to break apart under the strain of disputes between Bataille and Callois (Paris 348). Miller and his Villa Seurat friends may well have been acquainted and felt in sympathy with the writings of Callois, who contributed a number of articles to Mesures including "L'Aridité" in the April 1938 number that also published Miller's "Tante Melia". But it was telling that David Gascoyne mentioned him in his journal. As Robin Skelton noted in his introduction to Gascoyne's Collected Poems, he was "far more aware of contemporary European literature than the majority of his fellows" - including Miller's Villa Seurat set (DGCP.xi).

In his journal David Gascoyne frequently pointed out that he belonged to a tradition of poetry which was European rather than English. He said he felt a kinship with poets such as Lorca, Hölderlin, Rilke, Rimbaud and Pierre Jean Jouve (DG.ii.55). As a matter of fact, he was personally acquainted with Jouve, who was not only one of France's major poets, but also one of the handful of French writers to contribute to the Villa Seurat periodical. Jouve had begun as a symbolist in the period before the First World War, passed through the unanisme group of Jules Romains, from there on to a socialistic engagement in "L'Effort libre", and the pacifistic activity of Romain Rolland. In the mid-1920s, however, he converted to Roman Catholicism and disowned everything he had written before. Nevertheless, despite the 'answers' provided by the faith, Jouve's work continued, it seems, to exhibit a rigourously sceptical intelligence, which was forever questioning his religious certainties especially in the light of Freudian analysis to which he had been introduced by his second wife Blanche Reverchon, a pupil of Freud and the analyst of David Gascoyne.

Gascoyne introduced Anais Nin to Jouve's poetic novels Pauline 1880, Le Monde désert, Hécate and the stories in La Scène capitale. She immediately "fell in love" with them, singling out their psychoanalytical aspects for praise:

> His poetic-psychological novels are masterpieces. Analytical insight wrapped in poetry is far more potent than bare analysis. The drug of poetry makes truth and lucidity more absorbent. ... Pierre-Jean Jouve has described a world in which visions, hallucinations, symbolism, usually relegated to our night life, operate in full daylight, and in unison with the body, fusing desire and fantasy, dream and action, reverie and passion. (AN.ii.127)

Queneau and Artaud, Callois and Bataille belonged to the surrealist fringe, that area of the imagination free of group exigencies which was closest to the heart of Miller and his friends. There were many others who had touched Breton's movement and then by their own choice or by the verdict of the master moved outside the perimeter of the official group. Of these Miller and his Villa Seurat friends were personally acquainted with quite a number. Joseph Delteil, for instance, was one of those ex-members of the group singled out for attack in Breton's 1929 manifesto. He corresponded with Miller from 1935 on. Brassai knew Henri Michaux, Jacques Prévert and the ex-dadaist Georges Ribemont Dessaignes; the latter two had been ostracised by Breton in the late 1920s. We cannot single out every link to renegade surrealists, cannot even say when precisely this or that contact came about. Benjamin Peret, a P.O.U.M. combatant like George Orwell, later contributed, for example, to the Michael Fraenkel review Death. But one thing is certain, the Booster editors were not the isolated enthusiasts they are sometimes made out to be. Marcel Duchamps, a dominant figure in the surrealist pantheon, never a surrealist himself but occassionally collaborating with Breton, greatly admired Cancer and was instrumental in having Miller Miller reviewed by Cendrars in Orbes(12). Anais Nin, too, visited Duchamp in the autumn of 1934 and took a portfolio of reproduced drawings to New York for him. She was greatly impressed by a an unfinished book of his, which was in fact a box containing scraps of paper and drawings and odds and ends. He said meaningfully: "It is a time for fragments" (AN.i.366f). We will now leave the world of the extra-surrealists with the image of Henry Miller playing chess with the man who painted the

famous Nu descendant un escalier in 1913...

Notes

1. WiP xii,31.
2. HMGN.37,92-96.
3. LtAN.51; DG.i.60.
4. WiP.8; DG.ii.90. A contributor to Delta, Claudine Chonez, published a book on Fargue in 1950.
5. AN.ii.170; MFHM.147.
6. Corr.30,90.
7. AN.ii.268; AN.i.17,277.
8. WiP.74; FJR.157f.
9. WiP.xii,31; DG.ii.50.
10. HMGN.128-137.
11. Paris 326; Gülich 247.
12. LtAN.160,164; Martin 303.

IV. Surrealism and the Villa Seurat 1937-1939.

"The history of the surrealist movement has been told many times"(Ray 1). It is a fascinating and colourful history, but it is also too rich to be recapitulated here in any detail. Since, however, the ideas of André Breton deeply influenced the Villa Seurat writers, and since surrealism provided for them a backdrop of self-definition of an importance rivalled by few other socio-cultural phenomena of the age, some of its main tenets and major developments up to the years immediately preceding the war must be called to mind. After that some aspects of the Villa Seurat's own particular relationship to the movement will be singled out for comment. This chapter will also provide a more detailed introduction to David Gascoyne, one of the protagonists in the short surrealist summer in London in 1936.

What is Surrealism? was the title of a long essay by Breton that was translated into English in 1936 by Gascoyne. "What is surrealism?" was also a question which intrigued and confused the inquisitive, both the enemies of the movement and sometimes its adherents as well. For throughout its history surrealism was in a process of metamorphosis: developing away from the dadaist scandals and confusions of the early days, it cast off in endless schisms and wrangles many of its original supporters in search for clarity, until by 1938 the only protagonist left of those who had been there at the beginning was Breton. Paul Eluard had left the group to join Aragon and the Communist Party; Max Ernst was disgusted by Breton's vilification of his friend Eluard and retreated to the South of France, while Dali was excommunicated for right-wing sympathies and commercialism. These disputes were reflections both of personal differences and also of doctrinal disageements, and a good way to answer the question "What is surrealism" is to give some indication of its doctrinal development through the 1920s and 1930s. The point of departure is Breton's famous original definition of surrealism in the Première Manifest of 1924:

"SURREALISM, n. Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations."

"ENCYCL. Philo. Surrealism rests in the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association neglected heretofore; in the omnipotence of the dream and in the disinterested play of thought. It tends definitely to do away with all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in the solution of the principal problems of life." (DGSS.61f)

As for so many who suffered the disillusion of the First World War, the surrealist adventure began with a fundamental rejection of the old moralities, traditions, philosophies and modes of perception of Western Civilisation. Modern man was divided, the cause of this division a prejudice setting the value of the conscious mind, of reason and logic, infinitely higher than that of the unconscious, the irrational forces, the dream and the night life (Ray 62). Drawing on the discoveries of Freud, surrealism proposed to take the unconscious more seriously, attributing to it a value equal to, if not greater than that of conscious reality. In direct contrast to Freud who wanted to explore the unconscious in order to secure and possibly extend the domain of the conscious mind, the surrealists proposed at the outset the "omnipotence of the dream". For them, as for many romantic enthusiasts before them, the unconscious was a region of revelation and the marvellous. The aim of their endeavour was consequently to set free those lost psychic powers, echoes of which were ostensibly to be heard in children, in primitive peoples and the insane, to explode the rigid shackles confining the imagination: "chains of preconception" as David Gascoyne called them in his Short Survey of Surrealism of 1935 (DGSS.59). It is important to see that from the outset surrealism was emphatically not a new art form or aesthetic movement, but was an attempt to change fundamentally man's way of life, to bring back a sense of wonder and of the marvellous, to re-interpret the world by means of intuition, emotion, association, hallucination, dreams:

> Surrealism provides the germ of a new mentality, a new way of knowing the world, and incessantly opposes all the old pragmatisms that are struggling to maintain not only the old economic order but the old order of thought, with its unchangeable 'verities' and its lop-sided 'common-sense', as well. (DGSS.131)

As we shall see in the discussion of the Booster editorials, the notion of altering at the core man's way of life by drawing on the powers of the unconscious was essential to the Villa Seurat outlook as well.

For the surrealists, a prime principle of this change was the automatism we have mentioned above, a poetic method of experiencing reality based on the Freudian concept of free association. Automatism, evinced most clearly perhaps in l'écriture automatique, was believed to circumvent, like dreaming itself, the psychic 'censor', thereby giving access to the discourse going on beneath the level of consciousness. Dreaming and automatism were both means of revealing the contents of the unconscious mind(Ray 7). Automatism, various techniques of which are described in Breton's first manifesto, was assumed to be the direct, verbal and waking expression of the flow of the unconscious (Hoffman 180). However, Breton made it clear that true automatism was more than an unrestrained outpouring. It required rather a certain predisposition and discipline, even "an alertness to the integrity and true direction of the flow"(Ray 9). For there were many forms of distraction, ingrained aesthetic prejudices, for example, "the execrable poetic rivalry" as Breton said (Ray 9), which made for inauthenticity. In effect Breton was later forced to concede that pure automatism was never really achieved; there was always some conscious and directing factor which interfered, and what is more, it was almost impossible "to tell the real from the fake"(Ray 10). Still, as a principle it remained central to surrealism, and for many, including the Villa Seurat, it stood for surrealism as such. However, as Breton pointed out, it was never conceived as an end in itself. It was rather conceived as a poetic modus operandi directed against a banal and vulgarly materialistic civilisation(1).

By the late 1920s, surrealism was in a crisis. The reasons were manifold. Tensions between the mystiques and the politiques had increased (RSS.123). There was a sense of stagnation. Surrealist pursuits often seemed malapropos in the face of the socio-economic upheavals of the times. Dream analysis, forced searches for the 'marvellous', the cadavre exquis game, all these conjured up startling but meaningless images (Ray 19). Poets like Aragon began to demand a return to reality. Surrealism was shaken, and it was only due to Breton's dominating position that it was not torn asunder completely. Breton made a radical attempt to put his house in order, as Brassai said: "Like Robespierre, Breton employed 'terror' in the name of the surrealist ethic" (BrPic.11). From the point of view of doctrine the crisis was mastered when Breton steered his group away from what had been predominantly an exploration of the inner world to a new interest in the world about them, when he extended the field of surrealist enquiry beyond the dream to include not only sexuality, black humour, the occult, but especially politics.

In the surrealist adventure, liberation of the imagination had always called for rebellion against all inhibiting forces, and these included preeminently the institutions of the State, the Church, the Family. Now, as the politicisation of the European life progressed, the goal became, as complementing the freedom of the mind, a total, a socialist revolution in society. Surrealists became social revolutioniaries and the agenda became a synthesis of Freud and Marx. They began to court the French Communist Party, even joined it en groupe. The title of their review was changed from La Révolution surréaliste to Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution. But it was not long before tensions arose. Their chosen brethren in the Party tended to regard Breton and his group with deep suspicion. Breton on the other hand was not really willing to put his group au service de la parti communiste, not really ready to surrender his identity as a surrealist, his imaginative programme, his right to criticise and to question. And so he exercised this right in ways which were more than distasteful to his Stalinist comrades, on the occasion of Maiakovski's suicide, for instance, or during the Soviet rapprochement with the despised bourgeois French Republic in 1935. By the mid-thirties tensions were so high that Breton was ejected from the Party. But this

exclusion did not mean an end of the surrealists' political engagement. Breton criticised the Moscow trials. In 1936 he joined forces with Georges Bataille, setting up a short-lived anti-fascist grouping called Contre-Attaque. Two years later Breton and Stalin's arch enemy Trotsky met in Mexico and with the poet Diego Rivera they issued a manifesto Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant. "If the revolution must erect a socialist system on the material plane, on the intellectual plane it must insure an anarchic system of individual liberty"(Ray 225).

It was precisely this absolute freedom of the mind which the Stalinist insistence on social realism called into question. In his evaluation of the widely publicised Aragon Affair, David Gascoyne remarked that the communists were mistaken in their scorn and suspicion of the surrealists "simply because their work does not happen to be about strikes, hunger-marches or life in the distressed areas"(DGSS.119). The surrealists' contribution to "the Revolution", he felt, was just as useful as that of the propagandists, the proponents of "proletarian culture". More than this, some surrealists even considered themselves more consistently communist, more revolutionary than the communists, for these were felt to "submit to all manner of compromise with the aesthetic culture and moral conventions of capitalism"(2). It was with approval that Gascoyne quoted from the second manifesto in which Breton said:

> I really cannot see, pace a few mudldle-headed revolutionaries, why we should abstain from taking up the problems of love, of dreaming, of madness, of art, of religion, so long as we consider these problems from the same angle as they, and we too, consider Revolution. (DGSS.89)

Perhaps we have anticipated. The angle of vision the surrealists felt they shared with their communist comrades was "dialectical materialism". From the late 1920s on Marxian materialism and Hegelian dialectics accompanied a slow redefinition of surrealism. This redefinition actually began with - Freud. In Die Traumdeutung Breton discovered that "the distinctions and oppositions that seem rooted in reality - between the real and the imaginary, the subject and the object, life and death even - are artificial fabrications of the rational mind"

(Ray 12). Such artificial oppositions were felt to be the products of a mind conditioned by non-dialectical bourgeois thinking. Consequently they were no more than figments and might be eliminated. Thus Breton's second manifesto of 1929. The opposition between the inner and outer world in particular was to be examined rigorously and possibly reconciled in "a realm outside the one governed by rationality" (Ray 12). No longer asserting the "omnipotence of the dream", the surrealists now saw that the world of the unconscious and that of the outer world were subtly knitted together in a relationship of correspondences, one which constantly interacted and seemed to move slowly towards "a higher plane where all contradictions will be resolved" (Ray 14). It was this dialectical process Breton's attention now focussed on, and as far as surrealist "art" was concerned it lead directly to the central concept of objective hazard.

Like many works by surrealists (including David Gascoyne's diaries), the famous Nadja or Les Vases communicants recorded a number of startling chance occurrences, dreams come true, mysterious correspondences and coincidences. In The Psychopathology of Everyday Life Freud had examined how the unconscious, by slips of the tongue or moments of déjà-vu and similar means, played a role in daily life. Unlike Freud though, for whom these were "easily explained as simple illusions or as manifestations of the individual unconscious, an unconscious not to be confused with 'material reality'", Breton believed that the individual unconscious, intricately connected to the outside world, was in fact possessed of prophetic powers (Ray 17). Outside circumstances often answered mysteriously to hidden desires of the mind, startlingly manifest for example in the phenomenon of love at first sight. Such strange encounters with the marvellous now happened not at surrealist séances but outside, in the streets of Paris, the flea markets, the arcades...

In its widest applications, automatism involves the recognition that man is not an epiphenomenon added to the universe, but a fragment of nature; and automatism, by sinking deep into man's unconscious, becomes also a means of investigating and revealing the world. (Ray 21).

Breton never gave up a materialist point of view, asserting that whatever one perceives by means of automatism was one's own inner voice (not that of some transcendental agency) (Modernism 308). Still his goal, as Paul Ray points out, was "the total recovery of our psychic power"(Ray 51) and this objective had a certain likeness with that of alchemists and other mystics. It also closely resembled that of the Villa Seurat, whose programme might almost be summed up in Miller's call: "Let us recombine the dispersed elements of our individuality. Let us reintegrate"(CosE.171). Significantly this injunction is taken from "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere"...

Breton felt that inner automatism in an exchange with the outer world may be capable of revealing those dark and hidden workings of the universe, its laws and necessities, which the mind of the positivist and of one limiting the application of dialectical method to historical or socio-economic phenomena is incapable of perceiving(3).

The search for the surrealist object, one corresponding entirely to some desire of which one is unaware became a favorite activity for the ambulant surrealists. When, however, the meeting with this object occurred all too rarely, yet another extension of the proper surrealist mode was required - and provided by a newcomer to the group. This newcomer, almost an objet trouvé himself, as it were, was Salvador Dali.

Dali's famous paranoiac critical method, described in the first number of Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution and later in La Femme visible (1930) became a driving force in what David Gascoyne called "the new, active, attitude of surrealism, as contrasted with its more or less passive attitude prior to the Second Manifesto" (DGSS.101). It was "more active and aggressive in that mental phenomena where (sic) deliberately imposed upon the physical world" (Ray 32). The surrealist object no longer needed to be sought out or discovered.

It could be fabricated instead. Referring to L'Immaculée conception, in which Breton and Paul Eluard had simulated insanity by way of automatism and thus gained a "new relation" (DGSS.99) to the outer world, Dali pointed out that the paranoiac manner of perceiving reality revealed certain qualities which he felt corresponded most closely with his idea of actively forming the outside world according to his own secret desires. A person suffering from persecution mania interprets the outer world entirely in terms of his obsession. As David Gascoyne said, he "is continually able to draw proof from even the minutest details of other people's conversation, behaviour, etc., that he is being persecuted" (DGSS.101). It was this re-interpretation of reality "exclusively in favour of the obsessive idea"(Ray 34), this conceiving, as Dali put it, of "the world of objects, the objective world, as the true and manifested content of a new dream"(DGSS.100f), which characterised his paranoiac method of creation as well, his paintings, his surrealist objects as well as the films Un Chien Andalou and L'Age d'Or. David Gascoyne described this development from passivity into what seems to approximate to the deliberate creative act of the more traditional artist:

> No longer does the surrealist await the message or the image to arise from the vast unconscious residue of experience; he actively imposes the image of his desires and obsessions upon the concrete, daylight world of objective reality; he actively takes part in 'accidents' that reveal the true nature of the mechanism that is life far more clearly than 'pure psychic automatism' could. (DGSS.135)

Perhaps it was also due to these developments that David Gascoyne expressed confidence in the movement's future in his Short Survey of Surrealism of 1935. He noted that surrealism was in fact "only just at the end of its earliest stages" (DGSS.132). Its great successes in the latter half of the decade seemed to justify an optimistic outlook. The movement had always been internationalistic in theory, its members were from many different countries. Still, hitherto it had operated mostly in Paris. Now, satellite groups were established in other countries as well. A Czechoslovak section had been founded in Prague in 1929. There was a group around Magritte and E.L.T. Mesens in Belgium. Other groups sprouted up in Yugoslavia, in Sweden, on the Canary Islands, in Denmark, even in Egypt. In England, Roland Penrose

"embarked with David Gascoyne on the formation of a group of poets and painters who shared our urgent desire to make clear to Londoners that there was a revelation waiting" (RPScr.60). As had the Belgians in 1934, or the Czechs and Danes in 1935, Londoners flocked to a Surrealist Exhibition in 1936. The New Burlington Galleries (David Gascoyne was on the organising committee) showed the work of sixty artists, mostly surrealists, from over a dozen different countries. There were lectures given by Breton and other members of the group, including one by Dali (who nearly suffocated when he tried to speak wearing a diving helmet). That same year Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined tea set, according to Paul Ray "the most famous surrealist object"(Ray 36) and a poignant example of Dali's paranoiac critical method at work, caused a sensational stir in New York on the occasion of another surrealist group exhibition. Several International Surrealist Bulletins were published, from Prague and Brussels for instance. Other magazines were dedicated more or less exclusively to surrealist work, the London Bulletin by Humphrey Jennings and E.L.T. Mesens, for instance, which had "considerable success" until 1940 according to Roland Penrose (RPScr.71). Roger Roughton, who has been mentioned above, published many surrealist poets in his Contemporary Poetry and Prose, and "played an important part in the dessimination of Surrealism"(FSAA.149). Roughton brought out on the occasion of the London exhibition in June 1936 a "Double Surrealist Number". Readers were astounded to see that even magazines like Grigson's New Verse were "coquetting with Surrealism"(FSAA.151)....

The Group Exhibitions were perhaps the highlights of surrealism in the 1930s, and the beginning of 1938 saw the great International Exhibition of Surrealist Art in the Galérie des Beaux Arts on the Faubourg St.Honoré. This was a most successful event organised also by Marcel Duchamps, and it included the work of over seventy artists from fourteen countries. Here, surrealism seemed at a new peak of success, the "wide and properly organised international co-operation" which David Gascoyne had felt a prerequisite for the movement's even greater importance now a reality (DGSS.132) - and yet when Wallace Fowlie called this spectacle "the culmination of surrealism" (WFSurr.114) a different note enters the picture.

Despite its great international impact, the surrealist movement was already beyond its zenith, even if not all critics agree with this opinion. Breton subsequently remained the lively shepherd of a distinguished surrealist flock, continuing in his New York exile from 1941 to 1946, as well as upon his return to Paris. There were more exhibitions, demonstrations, important manifestoes, magazines and other publications. Robert Short, who has written a number of articles on surrealism and contributed a chapter on dada and surrealism to the collection Modernism by Malcolm Bradbury and James MacFarlane, revealingly has written of the movement in the present tense as late as the mid-seventies. He says, for instance, that "the surrealists are making a plea for a greater control by man over his destiny and are searching behind the disorder of experience for a higher principle of order"(Modernism 308). Arguing against the claim that Breton's rigid control wasted surrealist energies, Short says that excommunications and admissions had more or less kept in balance with each other and that from the upheavals of the second manifesto on, the rhythm of arrivals and departures "has been maintained ever since" (Modernism 305). For the loss of Aragon and Artaud and the other early members of the movement, Short has argued, was compensated by the coming of Dali, Bunuel, Giacometti, Char, a temporary reconciliation with Tzara, as well as in the mid-1930s the arrival of Dora Maar, Wolfgang Paalen, Hans Bellmer, Oscar Dominguez, Kurt Seligmann and others. Indeed, the coming and going was such that it kept the "number of active participants in the group at any one time ... such that they can gather without too much discomfort in a café" (Modernism 305). But in spite of Short's argument, the "Surrealist sensibility is of the here and now"(Modernism 308), most critics would agree that the time between 1924 and the early 1930s was the movement's heroic period and that what followed was a decline from an almost unchallenged dominance.

This at any rate was the opinion of a number of well-informed contemporaries, including Halasz Brassai, who photographed many of the leading surrealists in the 1930s. In his book on Picasso, the Hungarian pointed out that by 1933 the surrealist revolt was over, and surrealism "a successful revolution whose promotors had acceded to power"(BrPic.11). Commenting on Minotaure, a very expensive magazine of modern art, to which he himself frequently contributed, Brassai described the surreal-

ists' collaboration in this venture as a compromise that lead them back into the fold of an essentially bourgeois art world. Minotaure was not exclusively a surrealist publication. It was produced rather for an allegedly despised audience of rich connoisseurs, for those "among the titled and wealthy snobs who were the first patrons and collectors of surrealist works"(BrPic.12). Similarly, in "The Golden Age", a homage to Bunuel, Miller criticised in the late 1930s Dali's spectacular successes in America. Dali was accepted by the American public and "Dali returns with his pockets full of dough" (CosE.60). Breton and his group had come a long way from their dadaist beginnings. Brassai commented on the Minotaure decision:

> The first Surrealist Manifesto was already nine years old. Scandals, excesses, riots were no longer the order of the day. The incurable despair, the condition of violence and premeditated sabotage were far behind. No one any longer talked about the memorable séances of 'automatic writing, hypnotic sleep recitals of dreams, destined - or, at least, André Breton hoped - to nourish all future poetry. In just a few years, this source, which had been held to be miraculous, inexhaustible, and 'within the reach of everyone', had dried up. Although Breton still successfully drew from it the images of his own poetry, the majority of surrealist poets had turned away from the exercise of verbal delirium. (BrPic.10)

Brassai, a number of whose friends had been driven from the surrealist group, went on to describe its terrible dilemma, caught between poetry and politics; a dilemma which no theoretical eloquence, however dialectical, was capable of resolving:

> As for the inherent contradiction which had split the movement for the past ten years, it was now on the point of a final rupture. Unable to choose between revolution and revelation, André Breton had constantly battled on the two fronts of political action and artistic creation. The social involvement which he considered 'dishonorable' nonetheless held a certain fascination for him, and in spite of his denunciations of the 'vanity' of all artistic or literary activity he was laying the groundwork - whether he knew it or not - for a new school of art. The incessant pulling and hauling between these two poles is the whole tormented history of surrealism. Compromised and divided as it was at every moment, only the powerful personality of Breton could have maintained a precarious equilibrium by expelling from the movement on one day the 'agitators' who were determined to take part in the social revolution, and on the next the artists or poets who were too eager to 'arrive', to make a name for themselves, sign contracts, and earn money. In the first decade of surrealism, the excommunications pronounced by Breton against deviations of the right or of the left, and the wave of expulsions, gradually thinned out its ranks. After

first having been praised to the skies, the flower of the period's artists and poets were either eliminated or managed to escape Breton's yoke. (BrPic.10f)

Cyril Connolly too believed that the days of surrealism were numbered. In The Unquiet Grave of the early 1940s he pointed out that its idiosyncrasies, its penchant for the marvellous and its anarchic strain, in short its romantic aspect, were simply malapropos in the modern age, belonged rather in the 19th century. The rigours of group discipline, said Connolly, were a pernicious concession to the age of mass parties and wholly repugnant to surrealism's (as he saw it) essentially aesthetic impulse. Surrealism had taught one, as he had pointed out in 1931 "how to be a romantic without being sentimental" (CCJM.241). It also represented, as he said ten years later, "the last convulsion necessary to complete the French artistic-cycle"(CCUG.125), a tying up of "the strands of classicism and romanticism, reason and imagination into a final knot". For a time it had restored "the clear head to the rebel heart"(CCUG.124). But then:

Surrealism, the last international movement in the arts, is now in its decadence. Why? Because it borrowed the Communist idea of a small iron-disciplined élite without the appeal to the masses by which such discipline tries to justify itself. An aesthetic movement with a revolutionary dynamism and no popular apeal should proceed quite otherwise than by public scandal, publicity stunt, noisy expulsion and excommunication. (CCUG.125)

Connolly wrote these lines during the war. But even before, many had felt (though for other reasons) that surrealism's hey-day was past. Even among its new English sympathisers, the feeling was that its truly revolutionary phase was over. Charles Madge, for instance, whose wife Kathleen Raine later incidentally said that his Mass Observation concept had "combined a surrealist conception of the irrational with a new kind of sociology"(KRDAS.47), wrote a number of reviews on surrealism in Grigson's New Verse, and in one, referring to Gascoyne's Short Survey of Surrealism in December 1935, he said clearly:

Surrealism is now in its academic period - the period of explanation and anthologies - the wider public. While we are young our energy is intense : when we are old our scholarship will be profound. (NV.xviii.21)

Similarly, in Auden and After, Francis Scarfe, who lived in Paris in 1936 and 1937 and had written surrealist poetry himself, observed that "Surrealism rapidly advanced to its academic stage in Britain" (FSAA.148). While underlining that it played an invaluable part in "The Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941" (thus the sub-title of his book), Scarfe nevertheless noted that it was "rapidly transformed into something more constructive in our modern English poetry" .(FSAA.154). Like Madge he seems to have felt it necessary to stress the discontinuities and differences existing between the phenomena of French surrealism of the early 1920s and that of what he called "English neo-Surrealism in 1936 and 1937"(4).

We have spoken of David Gascoyne's confidence in the future of the movement as expressed in his Survey. And in the preface to Hölderlin's Madness of 1938 he again placed great hopes in the "appearance of the surrealist movement in France; and in England..." (DGCP.xiii). In fact, however, the attitude of its young champion to surrealism was far more ambiguous. A "child prodigy" (AN.ii.267) who had published by the age of sixteen a book of poems entitled Roman Balcony, as well as a novel, Gascoyne had visited Paris in 1933. There he became interested in surrealism, which, as he said some years later, "by that time was no longer young, but which seemed to me to correspond to certain instincts of non-conformism and revolt I had always recognized in myself"(DG.i.109). In 1935 he again travelled to Paris commissioned by his publisher to collect material for a Survey. He became acquainted with Breton, Georges Hugnet, Paul Eluard, Man Ray and other leading surrealists, went on to translate work by most of the important figures of the movement, and to publish in the influential Cahiers d'Art in 1935 a manifesto, which Paul Ray has called "the first formal statement of surrealist principles in England"(Ray 86). He wrote surrealist poetry himself (collected in Man's Life Is This Meat in 1936) and came to play a major role in the short blossoming of surrealism in England. Nevertheless, to the important New Verse enquiry of 1934 he remarked on the characteristic surrealist preoccupations

in disparaging terms: "I no longer find this navel-gazing activity at all satisfying". And he added, significantly, of the surrealist mode of writing, that "for an English poet with continually growing political convictions it must soon become impossible" (NV.xi.12).

Despite his admiration for André Breton, the adolescent David Gascoyne did not keep to the Master's twisting path between the exigencies of political responsibility and those of the individual consciousness, between duties to the surrealist group, to the Party and to himself. In our youth our energies are intense, said Charles Madge, and the energies of Gascoyne and his young friends of the surrealist group in London demanded an outlet more vital than the 'academic' meetings in Leicester Square had to offer(5). The London surrealist group, in fact, seems to have born little resemblance to the strictly regimented cadre in Paris; Herbert Read was no Breton. It was almost taken as a joke, at least by those younger members who were also (and clandestinely) members of the Communist Party. Hence, for instance, the curious ambivalence in Roger Roughton, who was both a poet-publisher of surrealism and demanded its entire acceptance of the discipline of the communist United Front. There was no "revolutionary part to be played outside the United Front", he insisted, and, in direct contradiction to the experience and opinions of the French surrealists he claimed in all seriousness: "The Communist Party, with its policy of instant recall and maximum discussion of all issues before decisions are taken, is the most democratic organisation today" (CPP.iv/v.74). In the foregoing chapters on "Literary Politics", we have had occasion to describe how Gascoyne and other newly fledged members of the Communist Party derided the surrealist group, how they used the surrealist mask to politically subversive purposes (DG.i.74). The powerful political undertow at work here contributed to Gascoyne's estrangement from the surrealist movement. His friend Kathleen Raine later noted: "The grounds David Gascoyne gave for his break with surrealism were political" (KRDAS.54).

His Journal 1936-1937 confirms Kathleen Raine's statement that "he thought that he was about to move in the direction of a more explicit Marxism"(ibid.). But his journey away from surrealism was not that of Aragon. In later years he wrote that he was still faithful to his "youthful belief in the desirability of some form of socialism" (Labrys.v.68). And he never surrendered the position that the poet, as an exemplary sufferer, a seer, is also a speaker for all mankind. On the whole, his sympathies were with the ideals of the politico-literary 1930s. He noted down with approval what his friend Charles Madge said in the Left Review in early 1937: the novelist's function was to describe "the relationship of an individual to his class, on the basis of scientific materialism" (DG.i.78). But Gascoyne had at the same time begun to perceive more clearly than before the insufficiencies of such an approach. His own vision, he felt, was broader, his search was for a "new direction" both in society and in literature:

> not socialist realism (of the May Day kind), nor surrealist romanticism, but propaganda for being equally conscious of oneself and of society, of the dream and of reality, of the moral and of the political. (DG.i.80)

To complement the double concern of the surrealists about man "as a psychological being" and man "as a social being", Gascoyne now added another, the concern about man "as a spiritual being" (DG.i.110). Prior to his removal to Paris in the summer of 1937 he was depressed, felt increasingly alienated from his friends and dissatisfied with his work. He had been "unable to write a line of poetry" for eighteen months (DG.i.110). In the grip of a deep despair, "despair, physical and metaphysical" (DG.ii.13) he even began to contemplate suicide. All the while his preoccupations slowly turned to questions concerning man's existence as a whole. Only apparently moving more in the the direction of the surrealist mystiques, Gascoyne was no longer satisfied with the answers Breton's materialism had to offer (DG.ii.137). And in Paris, guided by his new teachers Benjamin Fondane and Pierre-Jean Jouve, he moved, 'progressed' (as Kathleen Raine would put it) to a new spiritual perception of the world, to a new religious vision of the world, aspects of which will be described below in the chapter "Eastern Europe and the Villa Seurat : David Gascoyne and Existential

Philosophy". The poems he now wrote, some of which he contributed to Delta, belonged to the new "metaphysical" phase, and, like his Hölderlin's Madness of 1938, they show that by the time he began writing again in Paris in 1937, he had shed the earlier surrealist mode all but completely. He had also emancipated himself from the Übervater Breton:

> at one time I had more admiration and respect for him than for almost any man living; then reacted against this rather excessive enthusiasm and, on account of the train of thought aroused by my work on Rimbaud, became keenly critical of his pretensions, sceptical of his undertaking (Fondane); and now, again, I feel attracted to him, but in moderation, and with, I think, a clearer understanding both of his errors and of his greater and unique value. (DG.ii.20)

As he said in "A Note on Myself" of 1937, Gascoyne wanted to explore what he termed "the inner problem of modern man: the necessity for greater consciousness of himself" (DG.i.110). And on this journey he felt he needed to be free of attachments to "any particular group, idealogy(sic), or programme" (DG.i.110). With the opinion that it was necessary "to be entirely free to develop my own individual preoccupations" (DG.i.110) and that groups with absolute corporate standards, the communist fraternity or the surrealist cadre in particular, qualified this freedom, he was in complete agreement with Miller, Durrell and most of the other Boosters.

Ironically, perhaps, it was surrealism which brought Gascoyne into the Villa Seurat orbit, for as Gascoyne remembers, Henry Miller, "feeling a general sympathy at that time with surrealist writing, and thinking, perfectly correctly in my case, that surrealists would be likely to be interested in his work" had sent to the author of the Short Survey a proof copy of Black Spring (Labrys.v.59).

Surrealists were interested in his works and he was interested in the work of surrealist. Surrealism influenced and inspired Miller and Anais Nin and the other members of the Villa Seurat. We have referred to the personal contacts with renegade surrealists such as Artaud, Queneau and Delteil. The Boosters were acquainted with members of Breton's circle as well. Like David Gascoyne, Miller knew the German painter Max Ernst(6). He also knew Joan Miro and surrealism's most

important film-director, Luis Buñuel. Miller deeply admired Buñuel. In the first week in Paris in 1930 he saw Un Chien andalou in the famous "Studio 28" showing in Montmartre. In October 1930 he saw L'Age d'or, the other surrealist masterpiece by Buñuel and his collaborator Dali. He wrote a long and enthusiastic letter to Buñuel, and they met at the Select. One of Miller's very first essayistic works to be published in Europe was "Buñuel, or Thus Cometh to an End Everywhere the Golden Age" which appeared in The New Review in 1931(7). In the latter part of the 1930s he wrote the above mentioned tribute, "The Golden Age", later reprinted in The Cosmological Eye. Here he said without ambivalence: "In asserting the value of Bunuel I am asserting my own values, my own faith in life"(8).

In a note in her 1935 diary, Anais Nin remarked, as we have seen, that the "big themes" which she and her friends discussed and which just could not be included in the diary, were to be found in the works of Artaud, Spengler, Rank, Denis Seurat and Breton (AN.ii.50). In the long harangue with the title "An Open Letter to the Surrealists Everywhere" Miller too says that there were few things which stimulated him as much as "the theories and the products of the Surrealists" (CosE.184). The closeness of surrealism to the work of the Villa Seurat, both stylistically and from the point of view of content, to certain parts of Black Spring especially, to Miller's Scenario or Anais Nin's House of Incest, is undeniable. It is also, however, not easy to define precisely. The complex climate of surrealistic preocupation, the air of madness, of black humour, of sex, dirt, cruelty and beauty, of dreams and hallucination, had long before blended in with the general artistic atmosphere of Paris. If one takes, for example, the surrealists' programme "to render powerless that hatred of the marvellous which is so rampant among certain people" (Miller quoted these lines with approval in his "Open Letter) (CosE.173), it is difficult to say whether a similar emphasis in the Villa Seurat writers was the result of a direct influence or not. Were Miller's celebrations of violence, death and insanity centrally influenced by Bunuel's films? Was Anais Nin's work inspired by the special surrealist number of Edward Titus' This Quarter of 1932, which she and her friends read so avidly? This number was edited by Breton himself and Paul Ray considered it "one of the best treatments of surrealism found

anywhere"(9). It is also sometimes hard to decide whether this or that similarity was the result of an influence at all or whether it was no more than some manifestation of a common spirit of the times. The precise relationship is particularly difficult to gauge as the Villa Seurat admired Breton on the one hand and on the other considered themselves and not his group to be the authentic surrealists ...

In his "Open Letter" Miller remarked: "I was writing Surrealistically in America before I had ever heard of the word" (CosE.157). Anais Nin said that Miller was "the only authentic surrealist" (AN.ii.115), and the language Durrell used in Zero she called "surrealistic" (AN.ii. 150). The term designated for Miller and his friends an area not exclusive to the shifting group around Breton:

> We used to say: 'Let's take the lead.' That meant going off the deep end, diving into the unconscious, just obeying your instincts, following your impulses, of the heart, or the guts, or whatever you want to call it. But that's my way of putting it, that isn't really surrealist doctrine; that wouldn't hold water, I'm afraid, with an André Breton. (PR.176)

The Villa Seurat always underlined that automatism was nothing new in the history of literature. Miller said in a letter to Durrell that "what constitutes Surrealism is a permanent thing in art, more especially in literature" (Corr.16). And he added: "Swift was a good one, and so was Lewis Carroll, in my opinion and Shakespeare too now and then"(ibid.). Referring to Herbert Read's collection Surrealism Durrell echoed Miller's view: "There are some good remarks about it. Breton, etc. Very true, but surely as ancient as Oedipus?"(Corr.19). Miller found "a pure and unadulterated surrealism in American burlesque films" (Corr.16). And when the Boosters "took the lead" they were, of course, engaging in pure and unadulterated surrealism as well...

What, then, was the difference between surrealism of the Bretonian variety and that which Miller and his friends practiced? What distinguished the first manifesto's écriture automatique and that age-old idea of 'inspired' art Durrell and Miller had in mind? Replying to an attack entitled "The Coward Surrealists" by Ezra Pound who, like Miller and Durrell, insisted that surrealism was nothing new, and that, for instance, the "xiith century had surrealism in plenty", Roger Roughton wrote in his Contemporary Poetry and Prose:

> Certainly the twelfth century, and every other century B.C. and A.D., had surrealism in plenty; surrealism as an unconscious element has existed since prehistory, and the only novelty about the twentieth century is that Freud's discoveries have made it possible for the first time to analyse, define and hence exploit this element. No surrealist has ever denied this ... (CPP.vii.136f)

But, if one follows Roughton's distinction, the question was: what actually remained of the surrealists' raison d'être if, as it was the case in the 1930s, Freudian concepts of the unconscious had become almost common property among intellectuals and artists (in some instances, of course, as with Gascoyne, owing to surrealist mediation)? Writers like Miller and Durrell and Anais Nin felt that they did not need the surrealist filter. They were familiar with all kinds of psychoanalytical work and were thus justified in questioning surrealist interpretations and claims to sole representation.

In the view of the Villa Seurat, what set the surrealists apart was not their Freudian awareness of the unconscious processes but the systematic rigour they applied to the analysis, definition and exploitation of the unconscious. Instead of admiring these explorations, the Boosters felt that, since these operations of the mind were necessarily of a conscious nature, they suppressed spontaneity and thus poisoned the very well spring of inspiration.

It was not only Miller and his circle who believed that a plethora of theory crippled surrealism of the Bretonian variety. Kathleen Raine too regretted that "whatever was in surrealism oracular, a true expression of the mystery beyond reason, was destroyed before it could manifest itself, through premature rationalization"(KRDAS.43). Miller said repeatedly that the surrealists were "too conscious of what they are doing"(CosE 159). Of course, in those post-Freudian times, he too and Durrell were conscious of what they were doing. But unlike Breton, they were no theoreticians (though they sometimes tried to be) and the lack of clarity and rigour in their thinking made for a certain flexibility and playfulness, with the help of which they were able to follow their spontaneous impulses heedless of logical jumps or even contradictions.

The Villa Seurat's tendency to identify orthodox surrealism with the psychic automatism of the first manifesto (believed to lead into incomprehesibility and trivialness) thus combined with the damning charge that Breton and his followers were too self-conscious and deliberate. "They are trying with all the powers of consciousness to usher in the glory of the Unconscious" (CosE.177). Durrell and Miller had nothing against theorising about the unconscious, but to proceed according to the Bretonian guide-book, that was a sin. What had come into the world as a liberation of the imagination was thus chastised by Durrell as a "barren mechanistic attitude to the subconscious" (HR.2).

Their own (occasional) automatism was no dogma. It was plainly not the basis of their art, no absolute. What Paul Ray saw in Durrell's The Black Book he might have discovered in Miller's books as well, "an unsurrealist use of surrealist devices"(Ray 307). In the chapters on the Booster and Delta a number of contributions by Durrell and Miller will be discussed in this light. Miller said in an early letter to Durrell: "I have used the method here and there, when it came naturally and spontaneously". And he added: "At least I hope so. I don't start out by trying to be surrealistic"(Corr.16). It was an important tool, but only one among many. As Durrell emphasised in the "Happy Rock" essay, Miller realised that while offering "a means of breaking out of this hypnotic autism" surrealism was incapable of teaching one "to

write about things that mattered - other human beings, death, marriage, sex" (HR.2). Durrell had said more or less the same in one of his early letters to Miller, noting that the surrealists were "mistaken for taking a perfectly just and acute criticism of art as a theory for the production of it"(Corr.24). Thus in the view of the Villa Seurat it was small wonder that the productions of the surrealists lacked "guts and significance" (CosE.177). Miller observed in 1936:

> Madness is tonic and invigorating. ... Very often the Surrealists give us the impression that they are insane in a very sane way - that it is 'ice-box madness', as my friend Lawrence Durrell puts it, and not real madness. (CosE.176)

We have already quoted Anais Nin as saying that "Henry is to me the only authentic surrealist". The sentence which followed was: "The others are only theoreticians"(AN.ii.115). She felt that "most of what the surrealists write is artificially produced by the mind, not by the unconscious"(AN.ii.178). This opinion was reconfirmed on the occasion of a visit by Breton in the Booster autumn of 1937. The visit was a disappointment, for Breton proved to be, as she thought, not at all "poetically and sensitively alert to the atmosphere of my life, to my inarticulate intuitions" (AN.ii.247). The admired poet of Nadja pontificated, revealed, as Anais Nin described with bitter irony, that he would not follow the invitation of a mysterious woman to a midnight rendezvous for fear of his 'enemies', and when later he did he took care to post two reliable friends within calling distance. No wonder that Anais Nin felt that in part at least surrealism was "conscious, premeditated and an intellectual technique" and "betrayed the man in the laboratory" (AN.ii.248). No wonder that Miller, insisting on his down and out past noted: "They talk of ushering in a general confusion, but they live like the bourgeoisie. ... They believe in the revolution but there is no real revolt in them"(CosE.177).

Still, said Miller, by way of their anti-cultural attitude the surrealists were moving "in the right direction", for they were helping prepare the chaos of civilisation, which he was so fond of invoking and from which he felt certain "a new life must begin, a life from the roots" (CosE.190). Nevertheless, though he was plainly aware that Breton and his circle were striving for similar goals, for the 're-integrated man', Miller felt that they were a part of "the death process" rather than exemplars of the "new life" (like himself). There were too many flaws in their outlook and mode of life, their 'impotent' emphasis on group activity, for instance. The Villa Seurat must have shuddered at the required attendance at daily meetings under the rule of schoolmasterly Breton, the rigorous group discipline, the pompous seriousness and self-importance. The Booster protagonists abhorred the kind of collective activity as demonstrated by Breton, Char and Eluard in Ralentir Travaux, a series of poems whose "extreme anti-individualist nature" David Gascoyne had praised in 1935 (DGSS.92). Similarly, the Villa Seurat denounced the surrealists' involvement in politics. Lawrence Durrell wrote of Read's Surrealism in 1936:

> I believe firmly in the ideal of cementing reality with the dream, but I do not believe the rest of this stuff. That the artist must be a socialist, for example. That he wants to transform the world. (He wants to transform men.) That he can work anyhow except alone. (Corr.18)

In conclusion, after having presented some of the Villa Seurat's criticisms of surrealism, it is perhaps necessary to emphasise that Miller and his friends were indebted to Breton. In Auden and After Francis Scarfe spoke of "the great movement of liberation begun by Surrealism"(FSAA.155). The Boosters benefited from the freedom the surrealists had fought for and achieved. This freedom might have become common property by the late 1930s, and for example, The Black Book already found young Lawrence Durrell parodying "the dislocated manner of the early Surrealists" (BB.215). But that does not diminish surrealism's contribution and influence in the least, and when Anais Nin first met André Breton in Spring 1937 she was duly intimidated, the reason being: "I am fully aware that his ideas have influenced all of us deeply" (AN.ii. 200).

Notes

1. Ray 12,4.
2. Quoted from Roger Roughton's "Surrealism and Communism" (CPP.iv/v.74).
3. Ray 21,55.
4. FSAA.xiii; NV.vi.14.
5. DG.i.38; Hynes 217-228.
6. DG.ii.9; Martin 336.
7. LtAN.81,134.
8. CosE.63; AiP.253.
9. Ray 80; LtAN.122; AN.i.167.

V. Americans in Paris and the Villa Seurat.

The title Edmund Wilson gave to his review of Tropic of Cancer was "Twilight of the Expatriates". Miller's book, he said, was "the epitaph for the whole generation of American writers and artists who emigrated to Paris after the war"(SoL.705ff). American Paris, so runs the implication of these lines, was dead or dying and Henry Miller no more than an anachronism. Miller was speaking "from the ruins" as another contemporary critic, Desmond Hawkins, observed in July 1938 (Criterion.xvii.69.797). Paris America was dead; this was an assumption which echoed through numerous critical articles of the time, until by the end of the decade it offered itself as a historico-literary truism. Montparnasse was outdated, the dream of the expatriate life finished for good. Hemingway, now a visitor rather than a resident, said as much in a letter from Paris to Esquire in 1933, a sad epistle which finely recognised that it was Hemingway and his friends who had changed and not so much the city itself (AiP.166). A year later Jimmie the Barman, another feature attraction of the Quarter, reminisced with quiet nostalgia about the Jazz Age twenties in a book entitled This Must Be the Place. And in a chapter dealing with the years 1928-1930, towards the end of Being Geniuses Together, Robert McAlmon, one of the most important publishers of the day, noted: "Paris was by now, as it probably always had been to 'old-timers', completely finished, with all of the old crowd gone and the Quarter impossible"(BGT.305). The following chapter, however, will show that Paris-America was not at all 'finished', and it will show that Miller's Villa Seurat group was a part of an active Euro-American community.

Kay Boyle, a contributor to the Villa Seurat review, arrived in Paris in 1928. In her memoirs she pointed out how McAlmon would always tell her that the old days had been wilder and the company more exciting (BGT.288). Years after that, however, toward the end of the next decade, another Booster/Delta contributor, a pugnacious young Welsh poet, graphically deflated the Montparnassian myth of McAlmon and other 'old-timers':

The post-war legend of American Paris, peopled with cowboy poets, amateur Gide-men, international drunks, plum-cake countesses, distinguished perverts and professional failures, based upon romantic alcoholism, uniformed lawlessness, the first fine rupture of puritanical beliefs (throw away your Trust), and raw and boisterous bohemianism - the American art-bug bites more viciously than the English one; there is no more ennervating a complaint than a dose of Fitzrophobia - is as dead as Dada. (NEW.xiv.1.11f)

Dylan Thomas invoked the eclipse of an artistic milieu, of a carefree life of soaring dollars and the carrefour Vavin. But Thomas also had in mind the ending of a literary era, of a particular literary style:

The hairs on the chest, through which Mr.Hemingway and his imitators looked at the world and which so shocked and delighted an English generation accustomed to limp dickeys, are ancient whiskers now; the rebels have calmed down, and certain of those writers who were rebellious only so long as they were unappreciated by the world they professed to scorn have been stunned with a Book Club. (ibid.)

Paris once was, as George Wickes put it, "the center of the American literary world"(AiP.160). By the early 1930s this was no longer so. In the Depression decade, as Exile's Return asserted with a rough confidence, the feeling was that "Paris was no longer the centre of everything 'modern' and aesthetically ambitious in American literature" (EC.284). Cowley's book described the important shift in literary sensibility which we have mentioned before. He outlined the changed view of art, one that had come up even before the Wall Street fiasco. This was the "reaction in the direction of the study of man in his relation to his neighbor and to society" (AxC.294), which Edmund Wilson spoke of in Axel's Castle of 1931. From 1928 on, the two returned exiles, Matthew Josephson and Malcolm Cowley, both veterans of European dadaism, expressed in contributions to transition their extreme dissatisfaction with what was depicted as a dominantly aesthetic, socially indifferent outlook which many expatriates held. They demanded that the exiles return home, face less etherial challenges and fight for a more humane society in America (DLB.236). Their criticism did not go unheeded.

When in 1929 economic disaster plunged the United States into a crisis which was to change the face of society, the exiles began to return home in shiploads. We have referred to this in the chapter "Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell : Metropolitan Exile and the 'Gauguin of modern poetry". Many left Europe because their sources of income had run dry overnight. Some, like Samuel Putnam or Walter Lowenfels, felt that the tremendous upheaval of American Capitalism, that seemingly indestructible edifice, allowed for a new beginning, for the re-building of society as such. For a while this vison of a transformed America, built on the ruins of what was regarded as a terrible aberration, took hold of many writers and artists. Many believed that now, for once, the artist might bridge the pernicious chasm which had hitherto, to the detriment of both sides, divided him from American life. It was an alluring vision. Malcolm Cowley said in his Exile's Return: "The artist and his art had once more become part of the world, produced by it and perhaps affecting it"(ER.287).

Artists and writers, as we have said, now tried to contribute their part to a radical change, one which was seen increasingly in socio-economic, in Marxist terms. "People stopped talking about Proust and Picasso to argue about Potemkins and Piatiletkas" (Criterion.xvii.70.166ff). Social and political engagement and criticism (Putnam taught at a Workers' School), contributing to the New Masses and the Partisan Review (DLB.341), not only came to be regarded as part of of a broad national reconciliation, it also came to share in the high moral aura of an humanistic idealism, a climate not at all congenial to the Villa Seurat immoralists and other exponents of "poetic isolation".

The links between the expatriates' return and the Marxist reorientation of literary America in the 1930s were more complex than the above sketch can suggest. As Cowley pointed out in the revised edition of Exile's Return, the protagonists of his story, those who had fled to Europe after the Great War and then returned, "played only a secondary part" in the socio-political engagement which became a mark of the arts in the Depression years. The new mode, he argued, was actually initiated by a "somewhat younger group", by a generation of "brilliant college graduates of the years after 1925" (EC.295). The Hemingways

and Fitzgeralds and even Dos Passos, he argued, were mostly "refractory to social or political discipline", and only a handful of them "followed the current fashion by writing socially conscious poems or proletarian novels"(EC.295). Still, the shift away from a studied indifference to politics was a general phenomenon of the age. Very few were able to remain aloof. As Hemingway's example shows, public events like the Spanish Civil War politicised even those last few who were not political writers from the beginning. One group, however, was more or less outside, or so it was generally felt. These were the Americans who chose to remain in Paris in the Depression years and after. A highly sceptical view of the literary expatriate arose. As we have said above, the expatriate, once the artists' paradigm, came to be looked upon as eccentric, an escapist and even a traitor to the Cause.

Ironically, perhaps, these attacks were reminiscent of the lively expatriate debates which continually flared up in American magazines and newspapers throughout the 1920s. For if the typical expatriate of that decade tended to pour scorn on an America of "puritanism, prohibition and booster clubs" (DLB.xii), he in turn was singled out for attack by those critics, who asserted that his motives were no more than hedonistic, opportunistic and escapist, and that the sojourn abroad was of no use whatsoever for American native culture (Hoffman 76f). But whereas the authors of The Sun Also Rises and Tender is the Night were still assured of the sympathies of a majority of American artists, and whereas they were no less than a vanguard whose trek to Europe had been emulated literally by thousands of their compatriots (Paris police registered some thirty five thousand Americans living in Paris in 1927), their successors of the 1930s were outside the mainstream.

While visiting New York in 1935 Miller wrote to his friend Alfred Perlès: "The expatriates are anathema to the Americans, particularly to the Communists" (ARNY.10). The reason, as he said to another correspondent, was that for the Americans "the expatriate is an escapist" (1). Miller was making a sweeping gesture, but the general drift of his claim was probably correct. The expatriate was regarded as an escapist, one who shunned his more immediate social obligations. He was also felt to sabotage 'objectively' the possibility of revolution,

of erecting on the ruins of the old a new, more humane society of equals. And all this simply in order to pursue the solipsistic experimentalism and aesthetic eccentricities of the outmoded 1920s. Detached from society, which was after all the only truly jusifiable object of study, his art can have no claims to attention. This at any rate, was the reason Edmund Wilson gave for the fact that American left-wing critical opinion ignored a work like Tropic of Cancer. Tropic of Cancer was "merely a product of the decadent expatriate culture" and thus by definition "of no interest to the socially minded and forward looking present"(SoL.705). The expatriate, in short, was regarded at best as a pitiable anachronism, at worst, as a class-enemy, a disgrace to the human race and to social progress, one who "has no right to exist"(Grigson) (NV.xxxi/xxxii.2). Naturally, exiles like Henry Miller tended to return the charge by claiming that writers who engaged in politics in America were almost congenially incapable of producing major works of art. Writing from New York in 1935 Miller proclaimed that his writing was far superior to that of any of his contemporaries:

> I look out over other men's work here in America - and there are only one or two I need consider at all as rivals. They are nothing. I am alone, the field to myself, but alas unrecognized and unchampioned. Alone in my private glory. (Martin 310)

It is not necessary to contrast Miller's assessment with the fascinating work produced by American writers in the Depression decade, work that was more memorable than Granville Hick's anthology Proletarian Literature in the United States might suggest. A short glance at the work of William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and John Steinbeck, of John Dos Passos, Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, of James Farrell and Erskine Caldwell, of Georges Santayana and all the others who published important novels in this decade, is enough to relegate into the category of self-aggrandisation and polemic Miller's situating the work of his contemporaries in the "realm of fine upholstery, of life garni, of charlotte russes and choclate éclairs, of corn rippers and whataboys" (Martin 310). The American novel of the 1930s does not need to be championed; Paris-America on the other hand does.

It is our opinion that the impulses coming "from the ruins" anything but irrelevant. The vast majority of American 'exiles' had returned home from Europe, but if one considers the unflattering pictures drawn by many contemporaries (including Hemingway) of their compatriots in Montparnasse in the 1920s, images such as Orwell's "shrieking poseurs" and good-for-nothing "neglected genii", for instance, then the radical purge brought about by the Depression was not too great a loss. It is true that the "moveable feast" years of Hemingway and Fitzgerald were gone for good, but to shut one's eyes to those Americans who remained in Paris and continued to work there seems a mistake. At least this was what young Dylan Thomas believed. In fact, Thomas felt - in October 1938 - that the Hemingway-Fitzgerald epoch had been but a passing phase, an overture, and not even a very impressive one either. Thomas felt that Paris-American art was only just coming into its own, and of the three names he lists with this maturescence Miller's was one. So was that of another contributor to the Villa Seurat review, Kay Boyle.

> Now the real literature of American Paris has grown up, through that legend and its death, into honesty and maturity. Look at the elaborate journals of Henry Miller, the terrific "Nightwood" of Djuna Barnes, and this new novel by Kay Boyle. (NEW.xiv.1.11f)

But whether one considers the American experience in the Paris of the 1930s a beginning, one which was emanating from the debris of the Jazz Age and pointed into the future, or whether one felt that it was an ending, a candle flickering in a twilight, it is certainly true, at least as far as the authors of Nightwood and Monday Night and Tropic of Cancer were concerned, that a number of those critics who did not on principle ignore works by expatriate writers tended to agree that there was something about these "products of a decadent culture" which was surprisingly alive and energetic. Miller might be shouting from the ruins, he might be no more than a relic, but, as A.Desmond Hawkins suggested, "put any page of Mr.Miller's own authentic writing beside any novel written in England dring the last five years, and it will be obvious that he has freshness, vigour, panache, and an intimacy with his environment that our native gentility has lost. (Criterion.xvi.64.502).

Like Dylan Thomas, Hawkins plainly admired Henry Miller. However, in his eyes Miller was "the last American enfant terrible left on Paris" (ibid.). Similarly, but with a less friendly undertone Waverly Root concluded his three retrospective essays on Miller:

> After 1932 Miller might almost be said to have had Montparnasse to himself. He was the last heir of its glamour, and he reaped the benefit of it. (WRHMAN.7)

There is much that argues against this view. The image of the sole survivor, operating in a kind of cultural vacuum - "There is plenty of room now, and Mr.Miller does the rounds in slow comfort" said Hawkins (Criterion.xvi.64.502) - is quite misleading. Miller's Montparnasse was not populated by ghosts. Like most of the American exiles of the preceding decade, Miller lived in what Malcolm Cowley called "an active Franco-American culture"(DLB.xiii). It was cosmopolitan Paris-America in 1925 and it was Paris-America in the 1930s when Miller lived there.

Of course, Paris-America had changed over the years. "Montparnasse was in decline" said one critic (DLB.282f), and it certainly was less crowded by Americans than before. Still, Paris-America had not vanished entirely and its masks and manifestations were as manifold and exciting as ever. As a matter of fact, these masks and manifestations went well beyond that area of experience described in Miller's Tropic of Cancer. The book which so many felt stood exemplarily for the expatriate world of the 1930s described only a segment. Orwell pointed that Miller's work dealt almost entirely with that "lumpen-proletarian fringe which has been able to survive the slump because it is composed partly of genuine artists and partly of genuine scoundrels" (CE.i.541). But Paris-America was composed of more than scoundrels and artists. The rich texture of American life in Paris might have grown somewhat threadbare after the slump, but it still ranged widely across the "dozens of special milieux" Cowley mentioned above (DLB.xiii). The impoverished proof-readers of the Paris Herald moving in the Cancerian bohème, were only one facet of a world which stretched to the frequenters of the Ritz - "Cocktails at the Ritz", noted Anais Nin in November 1937(AN.ii.274). It included the

prosperous Right Bankers and the bridge-playing, Booster reading members of Elmer Prather's American Country Club of France, the wealthy visitors of Bricktops cabaret and the Brasserie Lipp as well as the eternal and rich tourists of European art. Paris-America was a realm which reached from the much haunted American Express offices in the rue Scribe all the way to Elizabeth Arden in the rue de la Paix, where elegant women like the "nomade de luxe" Anais Nin occasionally went "to shed my fatigue" (AN.ii.51), and from there it stretched to the young members of the American Battalion convalescing after combat in Spain, or to a concert by the great, but sadly forgotten jazz singer Valaida Snow at "Chez Jimmy", which advertised itself in the Booster as "the only cabaret in town where you can still enjoy that old 1927 atmosphere" (B.i.25). Paris-America was also the above-mentioned reading given by Ernest Hemingway and Stephen Spender on May 12th 1937 at Sylvia Beach's famous "Shakespeare and Company", attended by James Joyce, André Maurois, Paul Valéry, Jules Romains, Stuart Gilbert, Natalie Barney, Janet Flanner, Jean Paulhan, Duhamel, Eugene Jolas, the American ambassador to France, William Bullitt, and others. American Paris in the 1930s was certainly more than Henry Miller and the "American dead-beats cadging drinks in the Latin Quarter" described so impressively in Tropic of Cancer (CE.i.542). A glance at the diaries and notebooks of the day confirms this emphatically, and as far as eccentric ostentation and luxury were concerned the 'earnest' thirties were in fact not necessarily less exciting and frivolous than the decade before. Here is Anais Nin's description of a night on the town with friends from New York:

> Bright lights, savory dinner at Maxim's, Cabaret aux Fleurs to watch Kiki... From the Cabaret aux Fleurs we went to the Boule Blanche. Mr.W. was very red after a month of hunting in Scotland. When the Negro hostess bent over Mr.W. to serve his drink, he stared at her so intensely that she simply pulled her breast out of her dress and offered it to him. (AN.ii.54)

Paris America was not at all defunct, and the young American students "finishing their education" in the expensive art-school of André Lhôte were part of it, as were the American bar-tenders and jazz musicians of Montmartre and Montparnasse haunts, of the Boeuf sur le Toit, Graff's, Melody's, the Swing Club, or the Binocle. Waverly Root's assertion that Miller's "was the only coterie left in Paris" (WRHMAN.7H) simply misrepresents the multifariousness of the past for the sake of polemic.

Still, it is undoubtedly true that literary and artistic activity was down compared to the boom years of the 1920s. Root may be right in saying: "There was more competition then"(WRHMAN.7H). Despite the continuing presence of some eminent writers like Joyce or the magna mater of a whole generation of American expatriates, Gertrude Stein, fewer writers actually lived and worked in Paris. This decline can be demonstrated statistically. Of the three English-language newspapers only the Herald continued in the late 1930s. The number of little magazines published from Paris had dwindled to a handful. Apart from the Booster and an expensive English edition of Teriade's Verve, apart from two or three magazines whose editorial board included Americans (Mesures or Volontés), Transition was the only American review appearing in Paris after 1936. Of the thirteen Anglo-American publishers only three were still in business (The Black Sun, Carrefour, Obelisk).

As Sylvia Beach wrote to her father in 1937: "Everyone here wants to flee to America away from wars and dictators" (SB.374). Business was bad for her, and Shakespeare and Company's wealthy American clientele of former days had all but disappeared. She wrote to James Laughlin to send only a few copies of his New Directions, for there were not many who would spend money on art these days: "Most of the English and American intellectuals are gone"(SB.378). Aside from some old friends, her "most distinguished English-speaking patrons" were now in fact no longer Americans but Englishmen, to be more precise, those young English writers like Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, Isherwood and Connolly, who frequently passed through Paris in these years on their way to or from Spain (SB.387f).

But if some Americans were frightened away by the political turmoil in Europe, others in turn were attracted by it. Theodore Dreiser, "looking rather like a depraved headmaster in retirement" attended the meeting of the International Association of Writers in 1938 described above (DG.ii.50). Some writers, preeminently Ernest Hemingway, made their way via Paris to Madrid and the Spanish scenario in order to report or even to fight. For them Paris was often a place of repose, and they returned there (if, like Hemingway, they could afford to) every two or three months (SB.376). Still, many of those who came to Paris now were more consciously visitors than the expatriates of former days. Few continued to feel, as did Miller and his acquaintance, the painter G.B.Benno "that Paris is not only the place to work, but the place to live"(LB.iii.11). Benno had worked in Paris in the 1920s, returned to New York in the early 1930s and, after a time of futile labour and despair, come back to Paris with a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1932. Most of the Americans who now came, were, however, visitors, and Sylvia Beach diligently recorded how old acquaintances like Robert McAlmon or James Farrell, one of Miller's "pet aversions"(Putnam 115f), would show up from time to time. Even so, the presence of American writers and artists in Paris in these last three years of European peace was not neglible (even if one considers that many of them stayed for only a short period) and it formed the more immediate atmospheric context of the Villa Seurat.

There was Eugene Jolas, Margaret Anderson who published the Little Review, the novelists Julian Green and Djuna Barnes; there was Caresse Crosby, who ran the Black Sun Press, James Thurber and Thornton Wilder and Janet Flanner who sent her fortnightly "Letter from Paris" to the New Yorker. There was Laurence Vail and Kay Boyle, Ford Madox Ford, who visited Shakespeare & Company for the last time in 1938, Richard Thoma and Edith Wharton, Alice B. Toklas and her famous autobiographer; there was Langston Hughes and Louis Bromfield, Emily Holmes Coleman, Elliot Paul, former co-editor of transition, William Shirer, the journalist, Solita Solano, disciple and secretary of the Russo-Greek mystic Gurdijeff, William Saroyan and Irving Babbitt and E.E.Cummings, Peggy Guggenheim and the formidable Nancy Cunard....

It is true, this milieu was different from that of the 1920s, especially in that it seems to have produced far fewer works of art or literature. One of the chief reasons for this has been pointed out above, that the old idea that "producing works of art was a moral purpose that took precedence over others"(DLB.xii) had grown brittle with the years. Some painters and photographers like Man Ray or Abraham Rattner still participated actively in the cosmopolitan art world of which Paris was still the centre, their contributions coming out in magnificent magazines like Minotaure or the colourful Verve. But these were exceptions. Expatriate art was in decline, and it was only when a publishing company like Jack Kahane's Obelisk Press "specialised" (in what was unprintable in America and England) that trade continued to flourish.

The early 1930s did see some expatriate anthologies, one of which was Pete Neagoe's Americans Abroad. This book was compiled in 1932 and included much work by writers of the old Montparnasse epoch. Still self-consciously expatriate, it presented work by Hemingway, Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Cummings, Cowley, McAlmon, Putnam and Pound. Though it also printed Henry Miller's "Mademoiselle Claude", Americans Abroad was already in the nature of an obituary (Ford 312). Some years later there appeared from London another anthology which revealed a crucial shift in attitude. 365 Days was a collection of 365 page-length short stories, a compilation which Kay Boyle had begun in 1934. It has been called "one of the more unusual publishing ventures of the expatriate thirties" (DLB.52), but, significantly, 365 Days was not really an expatriate publication at all. It included work by quite a number of writers who were not living abroad. The old dualism expatriate-indigenous was no longer the organising principle it once had been, for the expatriate world had greatly dwindled in importance. Aside from Miller himself, the contributors to Kay Boyle's book included Hilaire Hiler, Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, William Saroyan and James Laughlin, writers who were soon to associate directly and indirectly with the Villa Seurat magazine.

Kay Boyle

The world of the Paris expatriates had shrunk over the years. Still, this does not mean that they all knew one another or even of one another. Although they were virtually neighbours and frequented the same cafés Man Ray and Henry Miller, for instance, never met in Paris (Autoportrait 346). Gertrude Stein was known to select carefully whom she admitted to her illustrious presence. According to Bern Porter, she categorically refused to see Henry Miller: "Gertrude would say: We're very particular who we pass meals to" (Mailer 83). Nevertheless, Paris-America was no vastly sprawling organism, and so although Miller never met Gertrude Stein, he did visit her brother Leo on one occasion. He also sent to her in May of 1935, "in an unlikely tribute", a copy of his first book "for advice and comment" (JHGS.193). Janet Hobhouse, Stein's biographer, does not mention that Miller thought her coment on Cancer "absolutely imbecilic" (Corr.81). But in the Paris community the old woman was still a rugged monument, and David Gascoyne, who knew quite a number of American expatriates, recorded with great comedy an afternoon discussion, "vaguely all-embracing", where the formidable Gertrude, "a natural force", simply overwhelmed in "downright and nonsensical" manner the "quietly earnest and conscientious" Stephen Spender and his wife Inez (DG.ii.114)...

Another eminent writer of the Paris American scene was the above mentioned Djuna Barnes. Her novel Nightwood was a great success in 1936, praised in a preface by T.S.Eliot. It has been described in the following terms: "Few works so intensely distill the anguish of the American abroad in Paris in the twenties and thirties, cut off from his native roots in a culture that has lost its sense of history and tradition"(DLB.18). Djuna Barnes was an acquaintance of David Gascoyne. He described an encounter with her in December 1938:

> Did I know Henry Miller, she asked me, and what was he like? Wasn't he a shit? Look at his picture, she said indignantly, he surely must be a Jew? - His name is really Müller, I told her, and he rather tends to think he's a modern Goethe. He always talks as though he hates the Jews. - All the more reason to suppose he is one, she said. In spite of all this, she seemed ready to admit there was 'something' in Tropic of Cancer. 'Three hundred pages of bickering, bitching and buggering: but yes, it has a sort of strength'. (DG.ii.106)

In the company of Wambly Bald of the Paris Tribune, Miller had in fact once interviewed her, but that was many years before Cancer had appeared and she may well have forgotten the meeting. Miller wrote to Anais Nin in 1932 that "she was cool as a cucumber, quick-witted and very tastefully dressed" (LtAN.59). Anais Nin was deeply impressed by Nightwood and sent her an admiring letter in the summer of 1937 (AN.ii.239f). "Angels for Djuna Barnes" is the title of a poem by Kay Boyle which was printed in the first number of Delta.

Kay Boyle, whose dramatic odyssey through the expatriate 1920s is recorded in the revised edition of Robert McAlmon's Being Geniuses Together, was one of the most important and prolific American writers of the time. By the time the Booster first appeared, she had already published several novels, two collections of short stories, the 365 Days anthology, several ghost-written memoirs, translations of René Crevel and Joseph Delteil, as well as dozens of poems and reviews in various little magazines, primarily transition. An acquaintance of Anais Nin, a friend of Robert McAlmon, Eugene Jolas, Archibald MacLeish, Emanuel Carnevali, Caresse and Harry Crosby, she did not live in Paris in the late 1930s, having moved to Haute Savoie with her second husband Laurence Vail (formerly married to Peggy Guggenheim). This was where David Gascoyne saw Djuna Barnes in the winter of 1938. Still, as Malcolm Cowley pointed out, Kay Boyle, whose novels appeared mostly in the 1930s, was almost the "only permanent expatriate" among the Montparnassian figures of Exiles Return (ER.292).

The acquaintances of Miller and his circle also included Caresse Crosby, Richard Thoma, a poet and translator who had been the associate editor of the New Review, and E.E.Cummings. Cummings, who was "a very quiet and reserved man", according to David Gascoyne, helped the young English poet to find lodging in Paris (DG.i.105). He had praised Tropic of Cancer when it first appeared (AN.i.257). Another well-known Montparnassian was Hilaire Hiler, a painter and a later editor of the Booster. By the mid-thirties Hiler had returned to America(Corr.36). He had belonged to the Golden Era of Montparnasse. Both McAlmon and Kay Boyle have described a tremendous party he organised in 1928. It was held in a great hall near the Lion of Belfort and was attended by "most of the French-English-American

bohemian art world" (BGT.275). Hiler was well-connected, having run a jazz cabaret on the Rue Campagne Première. The Jockey, as it was called, was only one of the clubs which he himself had decorated(2). Before he returned to America, this scholar of costume history trained to be a psychoanalyst. Anais Nin who also took part in Otto Rank's seminars at the Cité Universitaire has described this period in her diaries (AN.i.335ff).

A handful of the cabarets and night-clubs continued into the 1930s, but there were other meeting places for writers and artists as well. One of the most important was Shakespeare & Company. Sylvia Beach, the woman who first issued Joyce's Ulysses, was a most active agent in bringing together American and European writers even in the most difficult of times. She was one of the directors, for example, of Mesures, a magazine in French that was run by her fried Adrienne Monnier. "Beach was consulted often on English language texts" (DLB.35), especially, one assumes, on the July 1939 number which was dedicated entirely to American writers. Miller's "Via Dieppe-Newhaven" was printed here. Anais Nin was a member of her lending library and Sylvia Beach later recalled that she immediately took to the "frail and dark, 'Japanese looking' woman"(3). Although Sylvia Beach's biographer numbers Miller and Anais Nin among her friends of the 1930s (SB.382), Henry Miller once remarked that he found her somewhat "'subglacial', abstract, retrousée". He said: "She has snow in her veins"(LtAN.158). Nevertheless, Shakespeare and Company was one of the handful of Paris bookshops where the Booster was on sale....

There were other bookshops and publishers as well. Like Sylvia Beach, Edward Titus of the Black Manikin Press combined the two occupations. He published in 1932 Anais Nin's D.H.Lawrence, An Unprofessional Study. In those days Miller still hoped that Titus would print his early Crazy Cock but he promptly lost the manuscript copy. He was the editor of This Quarter which has been mentioned in connection with the dissemination of surrealist writing in England and America(4). Though it tended to be flawed by Titus' "pompous and trite editorials" - as McAlmon remembers them (BGT.252) - Perlès and Miller and Anais Nin were avid readers particularly of the surrealist number, to which the sixteen year old David Gascoyne incidentally contributed a translation

of Dali's "The Object as revealed in Surrealist Experiment" (AN.i.167). This Quarter folded up in 1932, as did Samuel Putnam's New Review.

For a time Putnam was an associate of Titus. Then, however, after a disagreement, he decided to go his own way, to publish books in his New Review Press (Richard Thoma, Georges Hugnet, George Reavey) and to produce a rival magazine. It was here, as we have seen, that Miller first placed his article on Buñuel and "Mademoiselle Claude". Putnam, a journalist and translator of Rabelais, of the famous Kiki, François Mauriac and others, met Miller in a bar in Montparnasse, and soon after decided to entrust him with seeing a number of the New Review through the press while he was away on vacation in the summer of 1931. As we have seen, this very nearly ended in a disaster. Still, even without the assistance of Miller and his Perlès the New Review ceased publication in April 1932.

Two months earlier another avant-garde little magazine began appearing again after having suspended publication for a period of almost two years. This was Transition. transition (capital "T" after 1932) first came out in April 1927. Transition continued into 1938, when the tenth anniversary issue of some four-hundred pages concluded the life of what had been Paris' most influential English language review. transition had two objectives: to oppose "to the then prevailing photographic naturalism a more imaginative concept of prose and poetry" (Transition.xxvii.7), and to create another literary trans-atlantic bridge: "To Anglo-American literature was to be brought the spirit of French modernism; to the Continent, young American rebels were to be introduced" (Hoffman 173). transition followed the wide meander of romantic, non-orthodox surrealistic art, searching for "a pan-symbolic, panlinguistic synthesis in the conception of a four-dimensional universe" (Transition.xxvii.9). It was the poet's task to synthesise all areas of being by means of his imagination, to bring together "realities far removed form each other, that seem without any organic relationships, that are even tending to mutual destruction" (Ray 75). Emphasising the "night-mind" experience as crucial to achieving contact with what was called the "world soul" and "the collective unconscious of the universe", Jolas' pan-symbolism was directed at a new

comprehensive view of reality. The goal he tenaciously followed was to "destroy the dualism between the individual and the universe, idea and reality, spirit and nature, God and world" and thus to reveal man's collective unconscious, his "true collectivism and common humanity" (Hoffman 179).

Hostile critics like Wyndham Lewis tended to identify transition with surrealism. In some ways they were similar. The projected synthesis of "the interior and the exterior, the subjective and the objective, the imaginary and the apparently real"(Ray 74) in fact anticipated Breton's surrealist manifesto of 1929(5). But Jolas rejected those implications of the synthesis which led the surrealists into the political arena, and here the Boosters were entirely in agreement with him. For Jolas the poet had to "be absolutely free to express himself, without critical or social hindrance"(Hoffman 177). Furthermore, though possessed of an equally strong bias against the rational mind, Jolas differed from the surrealists in his opting for a Jungian, rather than a Freudian variant of psychoanalysis, and unlike the surrealists his review did not return to scientific-materialistic foundations in its explanations of reality, but was willing to accept mystical dimensions as well(6).

Jolas argued that in order to go beyond the limitations of conventional communication, language itself had to be renewed. In this respect, he felt that he reached well beyond the surrealists, whose revolt did not encompass linguistic innovation (Ford 135). His plea was for "a nocturnal language" (Ray 78), for what he called "the Euroamerican language of the future" (Transition.xxvii.9), and he tended to proffer in his review specimens of this "new language" in poems and paramyths (short stories)(7). He found his vision realised in Joyce's Work in Progress, parts of which he issued serially. But, in spite of the close association between Joyce and Jolas, there were not many who shared his belief that a new language was needed to express the "night mind". A Transition questionnaire to this end drew "almost unanimously negative answers" (Criterion.xviii.71.396) and Jolas' own "dream language" experiments were generally considered failures, sharing neither the spontaneous fun of dadaist and surrealist automatism nor the sense of fulness and meaning which

(allegedly) resound in the dream of H.C.Earwicker. Many, including the Villa Seurat authors, simply thought them puerile and a waste of time (Ray 78).

Jolas' fuzzy philosophical diction and his curious tri-lingual poems contributed their part to exposing transition to the wrath of critics like Wyndham Lewis or Waverly Root(8). The magazine's interest in the irrational was particularly loathsome to Lewis, who felt that the widespread "romantic" propensity of which it seemed a part actually threatened the foundations of Western civilisation (BGT.238). Robert McAlmon, another critic of mystical inflation with an "almost pathological mistrust of the subconscious"(BGT.236) frequently polemicised against transition, which was not very difficult. In Being Geniuses Together he said that it was a great influence for many writers in Paris: "It was a constant example of how not to write" (BGT.252).

As far as the Villa Seurat review was concerned, the words of another commentator, Hugh Gordon Porteus of the Criterion, are important for he assessed its value as that of a non-political, experimental literary review in the hey day of political literature in 1937/38. The Booster and Delta belonged to precisely the same category.

> There is something to be said for the experimental magazine, as long as it is protected from the danger of political sparks. The magazine Transition has justified its existence. It has penetrated and investigated, but unsystematically, the fascinating territories of language, myth and dream. The very nature of such material must elude scientific method and logical analysis: and that is perhaps why Transition has far too much in common with mystical and occultist periodicals, and why it is never quite immune from the operations of the bogus and pretension. (Criterion.xviii.71.395)

Porteus commended Transition, adding: "A movement that has the blessing and active support of the author of Ulysses cannot be taken lightly"(9).

Up to the summer of 1937 Lawrence Durrell was only marginally aware of Transition. He wrote to Anais Nin: "Who is Jolas? Isn't he the chap with the dream-note-book? Is he any good?" (AN.ii.205). Miller, on the other hand, knew of Jolas' magazine even before he moved to Europe in 1930: "Transition came to us in America; Jolas was marvellous in selecting those strange bizarre writers and artists we had never heard of" (PR.177). Anais Nin and Henry Miller were regular readers and Transition was frequently a topic of conversation(10). It was a source of inspiration too. To Durrell's question about the relationsip between the artist and "God", Miller replied in a brief note in 1937: "Gottfried Benn answers it nicely (via Storch) in an issue of transition which I will dig up for you and show you" (Corr.111). In 1938 Transition issued "House of Incest" in its important tenth anniversary issue. Apart from work by Wassily Kandinsky, Kurt Seligman, Max Ernst, Philippe Soupault, Michel Leiris, Joyce, Beckett, Laurence Vail, Neil Montgomery (Fraenkel's champion), Paul Klee, André Breton (with a fragment from "Mad Love"), George Reavey and Herbert Read, this number also included pieces by the Booster contributors Kay Boyle, William Saroyan, Terence White, Hans Reichel and Miller with the essay on Reichel entitled "The Cosmological Eye".

Of the Villa Seurat set, Anais Nin's contacts with the Transition set were the most extensive. She was, for instance, well acquainted with Stuart Gilbert, who in the words of his friend Jack Kahane belonged to that paradoxical species of man, the "avant-garde reactionary" (Kahane 254). Gilbert was one of the first to compose a book-length study of Ulysses. He also translated Joyce into French. Well established in Anglo-American literary circles in Paris, Gilbert was described by Sylvia Beach as a "delightfully humorous, witty, paradoxical, rather cynical, extremely kind Englishman"(11). He greatly praised House of Incest on several occasions and wrote its preface (13). He also admired Anais Nin's diary - "You have the makings of a Proust" (AN.ii.167). He was a helpful friend to her. Perhaps it was through Anais Nin that Miller made his acquaintance. In a letter to Durrell he said that he gave Gilbert copies of the Hamlet exchange with Michael Fraenkel. David Gascoyne, too, knew the Francophile Englishman, noting in his journal in November 1938: "May also be going to help Stuart Gilbert translate 'Les Thibauts'" (DG.ii.91).

Miller knew Jolas. They were both members of the editorial board of Volontés. In the Spring of 1937 Jolas visited Anais Nin and he too praised House of Incest. Unlike her meeting with Breton, at this encounter Anais Nin felt a sense of concord and harmony:

> So we talk in harmony, a kind of opaque mystical language. I hear the semantic horses leaping over our heads, a bath of frogs and mists and his 'language of the night' with its red caves and very black letters and mysterious hieroglyphs. (Nin.ii.196)

Transition appealed to the Boosters for various reasons, the least of which was certainly not that it was ready to publish their work. In many of its ideas it was congenial to them. They shared Jolas' preference for Jungian concepts as opposed to Freudian ones. They were also in accord with Transition's critique of Breton, or at least with its rejection of surrealist automatism and the surrealists' descent into the political arena (Ray 77ff). In other aspects, however, the Boosters' outlook diverged from that of Jolas. We have said that they found Jolas' "language of the night" experiments puerile. Responding energetically to Miller's full praise of the wealth of vocabulary in The Black Book, Durrell wrote in April 1937:

> EVERYTHING MEANS SOMETHING. I don't like neologism except used as an occasional handgrenade. That's why Laughlin's dream-writing contributors bore me stiff with their 'wingle wangle obfuscating inspissate hungermarching shitshat'. Come, we demand more than chewing-gum. WE ARE HUNGRY. (Corr.83f)

As G.S.Fraser pointed out: "Durrell was rightly proud of the range of his vocabulary which rivals Joyce's without resorting to word-coinage" (FrLD.52). He had no use for a new "chewing gum" night language. Miller expressed his view of Jolas' Revolution of the Word in terms which make the epithets "puerile" and "nonsensical" seem flattery (Ray 175). "But who is interested in this language of the night?", he asked in his Joyce-Proust critique, entitled "The Universe of Death", observing: "Ulysses was obscure enough. But Work in Progress...?" (CosE.113). Aligning himself even with Transition's arch-Enemy, Wyndham Lewis, whose attacks he actually cites, Miller rails against transition's figurehead, the Joyce of Work in Progress:

> His language is a ferocious masturbation carried on in fourteen tongues. It is a dervish dance executed on the periphery of meaning, an orgasm of blood and semen, but of dead slag from the burnt out crater of the mind. The Revolution of the Word which his work seems to have inspired in his disciples is the logical outcome of this sterile dance of death.(13)

To Miller's mind Joyce represented the ultimate in modern man's physical sterility and spiritual death. Anais Nin quoted Miller as saying that Joyce "stands for the soul of the big city, dynamics, atheism, gigantism, frustration, an archeologist of dead souls"(AN.i.198). No matter that parts of Miller's own oeuvre might be described (and soon were described by Anais Nin) in very similar terms, he must have thought even less of Jolas' "nocturnal" poetry, which did not even have the redeeming qualities of (in Miller's view) misdirected genius. Still, Dougald McMillan, the chronicler of transition, records that many years later "Miller acknowledged his debt to Jolas and transition with a letter to Jolas, then suffering from his final illness" (McMillan 158). McMillan makes no attempt to suppress Miller's low opinion of Work in Progress. He even cites the "dervish dance" passage we have quoted above. Defending transition against the criticism of Miller and others (Robinson Jeffers, for instance), he offers an explanation for their antagonism which anyone familiar with Miller's work will have difficulty agreeing with:

> They resented its departure from everyday reality, its concern for verbal innovation, and its obscurity. In effect they wished literature to provide an easily recognizable surrogate for physical experience and were unwilling to allow verbal experience for its own sake. (McMillan 159)

It seems nonsense to suggest that Miller objected to literary "departures from everyday reality". His books are replete with quasi-surrealistic flights and purple patches of dark "verbal experience" which are impossible to paraphrase in rational terms. Miller was a poet and an experimentalist. Furthermore, drawing like Durrell on an extensive vocabulary and fired by a great love for words, Miller's "verbal innovation" had a more lasting effect than Jolas' "wingle wangle shitshat". Orwell for one would have said so, for in "Inside the Whale" he wrote about Miller's first two books with great admiration:

In them, English is treated as a spoken language, but spoke without fear, i.e. without fear of rhetoric or of the unusual or poetical word. The adjective has come back, after ten years' exile. (CE.i.545)

The Villa Seurat also thought that often the manifestations of the unconscious reproduced in Transition were artificial and self-conscious. It was the same charge Miller and his friends levelled at the surrealists. Anais Nin wrote in 1932:

When Henry writes insane pages, it is the insanity produced by life, and not by the absence of life. The insanity of the surrealist, Breton and transition is in a void; whereas that of Henry is caused by the absurdities, ironies, pains of a surcharged, over-full life. (AN.i.242)

Nevertheless, despite this criticism, which was also a way of asserting their own artistic individuality, transition clearly influenced Miller and Anais Nin in the earlier part of the decade. Anais Nin: "I am influenced by transition and Breton and Rimbaud"(AN.i.84). And in the later part of the decade, when they had found their own voice, Jolas' review was not only a welcomed publication outlet, but also one of the rare allies in the little magazine struggle to maintain the possibility of an experimental, non-political art in a highly politicised literary world. Transition was, as Hugh Gordon Porteus said, a "shelter for many refugees from literary tyrannies" (Criterion.xviii.71. 395). As I have suggested, these were precisely the terms in which the Villa Seurat saw their own little magazine.

Notes

1. IntHML.v.14; ACN.13.
2. BGT.92,256.
3. SB.316; Ford 27f.
4. Martin 231,240.
5. Ray 77; Hoffman 180.
6. Ray 79; Hoffman 181.
7. Hoffman 179; Transition.xxvii.9.
8. Ray 72ff; Ford 314ff.
9. Criterion.xvii.71.395. From the beginning transition championed Joyce. Initially, Jolas also supported Gertrude Stein. Again, Robert McAlmon presented an unflattering picture of Jolas and his editor friends in Being Geniuses Together: "Joyce, I suspect, was not taken in by the various adulatory kneelings of the transition group, but evidently Miss Stein believed completely that at last she was being understood and appreciated. It was heaven on earth for her to have a group of yes-men about her... (BGT.252). Jolas broke with the author of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas when she included in that book passages critical of him and his magazine. He struck back with "The Testimony Against Gertrude Stein" which was signed by Tzara, Matisse, Braque and others. Jolas remained a loyal friend to Joyce until the latter's death in 1940, helping him prepare and correct manuscripts, publishing serially what was eventually called Finnegan's Wake, defending it in a collection of essays that was published in 1929 and contained work by Beckett, William Carlos Williams and others. This inner circle of "adulatory kneelers" around the Irishman included his daughter Lucia, his son George, Elliot Paul, Robert Sage, Padraic Colum, Stuart Gilbert, Yvan Goll, Paul Leon and Beckett. Its story has been told comprehensively in Dougald McMillan's sympathetic transition The History of a Literary Era 1927-1938.
10. AN.i.72,87.
11. Ford 27; Ellman 612f.
12. AN.ii83,146f; Casebook 1.
13. CosE.124. I have added the word 'dance' which seems to have been omitted accidentally in this edition. see: McMillan 159.

VI. Analysis and the Artist : The Influence of Otto Rank.

"Reading Kretschmer", Lawrence Durrell wrote to Henry Miller in a letter of January 1937, "and would like to see whether you resemble the pycniks or the leptosomes" (Corr.54). Miller sent a photograph and Durrell, expressing thanks and "sincere congratulations" for the development of Miller's "frontal lobes", replied: "I see you're a pycnik. All great artists seem to be"(Corr.66). Durrell's jesting tone should not, however, distract from the fact that psychoanalytical categories and systems were of central importance for the Villa Seurat writers. Though by the 1930s the focus of literature had become primarily political and sociological, the Villa Seurat revealed, like Breton's group, like the transitionists and like so many other peripheral surrealists, a deep fascination for the study of man's psyche, and especially for psychoanalytical and psycho-anthropological approaches and debates.

From the Villa Seurat perspective some psychological approaches were more attractive than others, some easier to grapple with than others. In general, those interpretations which were thought to proceed from scientific, empirical, 'mechanistic' precepts were regarded with suspicion. Though modern psychology has all but dismantled orthodox psychoanalysis as operating bizarrely beyond the boundaries of empirical, i.e. verifiable science, the Villa Seurat thought Freud a 'mechanist' and 'positivist', and his followers were debunked accordingly: René Allendy, one of the most prominent Freudians in France and founder of the Société Psychoanalytique de Paris, became for Miller's circle the paradigm example of the loathed and inflexible 'scientific analyst'. Allendy had treated Anais Nin (and Artaud) earlier in the new decade, but his "unimaginative" method soon repelled her, and diary entries reveal her annoyance about his attempts to heal by what she considered "dogmatic" oversimplification (1).

There were other explorers of the subconscious, however, who operated in a manner which was closer to the heart of the Villa Seurat writers, in other words, poetically and intuitively. Their special fields of interest often concentrated on art, literature, mysticisms of all sorts, mythology, sex and religion. On the whole, these 'scientists' were regarded benevolently. C.G.Jung, E.Graham Howe, the sexologist Havelock Ellis, and Lawrence, the 'amateur' author of Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia and the Unconscious, might be named in this context.

It has been mentioned that the Villa Seurat writers were themselves part-time psychoanalysts, dilettantes in non-artistic enquiry into the human psyche. In early 1935 Henry Miller actually dabbled as a lay analyst in New York, taking on patients who were sent to him by a somewhat less unprofessional but all the more overworked Anais Nin. For a short period of time in 1934 she had in fact trained (with Hilaire Hiler) to be an analyst at the Psychological Centre of the Cité Universitaire in Paris. But these excursions had been no more than temporary.

Psychoanalytical concepts and terminology pervade their work, their understanding of literature and of themselves. The third Booster editorial, for instance, ended in a short verse which jokingly refers to the Kretschmerian typological dualism of the schizothyme-cyclothyme and schizoid-cycloid personality structures. This verse was part of a poem by Durrell entitled "Ballad of Kretschmer's Types", published only in 1960. Another example, Durrell's Key to Modern Poetry of 1952 can be viewed as part of his efforts at a re-evaluation of Georg Groddeck, a little known pupil of Freud. Understandably, then, Frederick Hoffmann placed the Booster (along with the surrealists and the transition set) under the heading "The Psychoanalytical Theme" in his important study of The Little Magazine.

What was the attraction of psychoanalysis? The Boosters' encounter with psychology and psychoanalysis was intense and various, but also of a highly ambiguous nature. On the one hand, the Booster group was drawn magnetically to Freud and Jung, to Adler and Wilhelm Stekel and all the others, ploughing through heavy tomes and annotating case-

books, pillaging them in true subjectivist-modernist fashion, looking for inspiration and corroboration, fascinated, it would seem, by the tremendous and all explaining ideological edifice, the absoluteness of whose claim to answer the questions of human existence is to be equalled only by religious or Marxist systems of belief. The Villa Seurat's fascination with psychoanalysis was a function of their own lack of an integrating Weltanschauung. But if psychoanalysis spelt freedom from doubt - Anais Nin on her psychotherapist: "In the climate of his certainties, his leadership, there is rest from doubt" (AN.i.344) - on the other hand, psychoanalysis and its practitioners were always suspected of operating all too closely to the despised cognitive sciences. The explanatory systems which the Villa Seurat admired for their comprehensibility here were attacked as objectionably reductive of an ever mysterious human reality there. Outbursts against a psychoanalysis which "has become in reality the worst enemy of the soul" (Purpose.x.3.148), against the "average Freudian analyst" and the all-embracing claims of a new orthodoxy were as frequent as admiring quotations and references. Criticising a long article on "Napoleon" in the Psychoanalytic Review, for instance, Miller wrote mockingly to Anais Nin : "But psychoanalysis is going to explain it. Yeah!!! Psychoanalysis will explain everything in time. The new state religion. Sic hoc semper aeternitus - or some such crap"(LtAN.135).

The Villa Seurat swung back and forth between attraction and violent rejection, between the fascination for some author who was moving in a similar direction, a fascination which was probably not devoid of a certain self-flattery since the "artist" and the "genius" were often topics of discussion (Freud on Da Vinci, Ernest Jones on Hamlet, Kretschmer on Hölderlin and others), - and the need to emphasise the essential differences of approach. The Boosters vacillated between what one analyst termed the modern artist's increasing tendency toward the cognitive sciences as a way of protecting himself against drowning in the world of his imagination, and the concomitant move away, the need to create artistically, that is, to guard his own identity as artist against the lures of ratiocinative explanations and "scientific" sobriety.

This 'explanation' for the modern artist's interest in psychoanalysis and psychology, as the "diversion of artistic creation from a formative into a cognitive process seems to me to be another of the artist's protections against his complete exhaustion in the creative process"(Taft 287), an explanation which was also something like a carte blanche for any unqualifed spree into the orderly world of psychological sciences, was offered by Otto Rank, a former pupil and assistant of Sigmund Freud, who had become acquainted with Miller and Anais Nin in 1933. Of the many influences on the Villa Seurat from psychoanalysis, Otto Rank was perhaps the most important. In fact, he himself played an important role as a magnetic pole in the Villa Seurat's oscillations towards and away from the psychological sciences. The author of Art and Artist (1932), a book that at one time inspired the enthusiasm of the frequenters of the Villa Seurat studio, was later attacked vehemently, at least by Henry Miller. In the early 1960s, however, when the time to pay homage generously to old friends and influences had come, Miller said: "Never shall I forget the impact which Otto Rank's Art and Artist made upon me" (IntHML.i.7f). It is with Rank and some of the ideas which brought about this impact that the rest of this chapter will be concerned.

Henry Miller, it seems, first came across Rank's Art and Artist in the year of its publication. Possibly, however, he was already familiar with the important "Life and Artistic Creation" which appeared in Titus' This Quarter in December 1931. From the winter of 1932 on, Art and Artist was a favorite topic in the American's long discussions with Anais Nin (AN.i.166). On the 6th of March 1933, Miller paid a visit to Rank, a meeting which he described in great and somewhat immoderate detail in a fourteen page letter to Anais Nin: "there was in that quick, brilliant challenge of minds a tremendous and fathomless exultation"(LtAN.108). Some time later, Anais Nin received Rank's Don Juan; Une étude sur le double from his publisher Bernard Steele. As Philip Jason points out, Rank's study, his drawing together of the "double" motif and narcissism and incest may have provided Anais Nin, whose House of Incest was already in the process of revision, with "an authoritative confirmation of the direction in which her own poetic instincts were leading her" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.82). But it was only in November that she made her way to this "legendary character" of the

psychoanalytic world (AN.i.278). Before going on to discuss their association and Rank's theories on the artist it seems advisable briefly to outline his fascinating, if tragic, life story.

Of Jewish origin Otto Rank was born in 1884. He was a student at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna and worked in a glass factory. In 1906 he joined the circle of Freud, who was quick to recognise the young man's abilities, his human qualities and profundity of understanding. On the occasion of one his first visits to the famous Wednesday evening meetings at Freud's house he read a paper entitled "Kunst und Künstler" (Art and Artist). This was published in 1907 as Der Künstler (The Artist). That year Rank became Freud's personal secretary. He took down the minutes of the sessions of the Psychologische Mittwochsgesellschaft der Wiener Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung. Apart from publishing numerous studies of his own, Rank became Freud's right-hand man, holding from 1912 onward the post of editor of the Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse. In 1919 he was made director of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Centre. He was also general secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association. A true disciple, Rank defended his master, proofread and published his work, saw to financial matters, negotiated in Freud's name, corresponded for the Professor in many languages. Though in later years the orthodox Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis ("dedicated to the immortal spirit of Freud") has tried to play down Rank's role by suggesting that he was no more than the society's "business agent" and pointing to his inferior formal education and the fact that he was "of a lower social class than the other members of the Committee" (EoP.164), the young man was nevertheless one of the ring-bearers, which signified that he belonged to the innermost circle around the founder of psychoanalysis. He was its youngest member.

In spite of, or because of, their very close relationship, it seems, Rank came to react against Freud as a benign yet intolerably dominant father figure. He wanted to go his own way. In the early 1920s tensions increased, for the young man felt that he was being singled out as a scapegoat for all those who were afraid to attack Freud personally (FrF.i.101). Rank was overworked. In 1923, he followed the footsteps of many of Freud's closest collaborators and committed what

came to be regarded as a heresy. He showed Freud the manuscript of Das Trauma der Geburt, which, though dedicated to his master, diverged from his concept as to the final cause of neurosis. Published in 1924 the Trauma of Birth argued that the experience of birth was "the ultimate biological base of the psychical" (Taft 83). All later fears and neuroses, in fact, all subsequent behaviour resulted from the attempt to master the traumatic transition from a condition of uninterrupted pleasure into one of global deprivation. It was not long before Freud felt that this theory was a threat to his own teachings. The relationship between the two men deteriorated, and in 1926 Rank finally severed his Vienna connections and moved to Paris. As Anais Nin put it: "He not only lost a father but a master, a world, a universe" (AN.i.289). According to Rank, the more conventional members of the group who were jealous of him contributed decisively to his estrangement from Freud. The story that Rank's behaviour was the result of a growing neurosis, and even a manic-depressive psychosis, was (and still is) circulated in psychoanalytical circles(2).

Rank paid a high price for his freedom and independence, suffering for the rest of his life from bad health, feelings of fear and of guilt (for having left Freud in his illness)(3). As Jessie Taft has pointed out, this traumatic experience of self-liberation, of freeing himself from the object of "identification" to whom he owed so much of his intellectual formation, became a crucial part of his views on the artist's psychical development. And significantly, this struggle for self-liberation as expounded "scientifically" in Art and Artist reminds one of one of the basic themes of the Villa Seurat writing.

> the overcoming of previous supporting egos and ideologies from which the individual has to free himself according to the measure and speed of his own growth, a separation which is so hard, not only because it involves persons and ideas that one reveres, but because the victory is always, at bottom and in some form, won over a part of one's own ego. We may remark here that every production of a significant artist, in whatever form, and of whatever content, always reflects more or less clearly this process of self-liberation...(4).

In Paris Rank set up as an therapist and later established the Psychological Centre at the Cité Universitaire. He taught there until he left for America in 1934. It was in his last year in Paris that he met Anais Nin. Anais Nin was his patient, then his pupil and finally his assistant and confidante. She followed him to New York in November 1934 and stayed there until June 1935. She only saw Rank again on a short visit to America in early 1936. Rank died early in October 1939 in New York.

Anais Nin's journals reveal that the relationship between Rank and herself underwent profound changes in the course of two years. In the beginning she had come to his office in need of help:

> Would he be interested in a woman who had lived out all the themes he wrote about, the Double, Illusion and Reality, Incestuous Love Through Literature, Creation and Play. ... I had lived out the entire contents of his profound studies so impetuously that I had no time to understand them, sift them. I was confused and lost. (AN.i.279)

Thrilled by his perceptiveness and understanding, she soon felt a deep need to be in his presence, even moving to Paris (from Louceviennes) in order to be closer to him. Rank began to influence her life and her imagination. At his wish, for example, she gave up her diary for several months, working instead on her short novels. As Philip Jason has said, relationships with important people in her life (her father) were increasingly described in Rankian terminology (Mosaic.xi.H.2.83). Her admiration for Henry Miller was qualified by her awe of Rank: "Compared with Rank, Henry seems pale and passive. Rank is active and explosive"(AN.i.344). Again and again she described the pleasure and benefit she derived from her conversations with him (AN.i.344). "His understanding is infinite, like the sea" (AN.i.343). Her interest in, indeed, obsession with the Austrian psychotherapist grew. His influence on her literary development was inestimable: "Rank made me finish House of Incest. He helped me to discover the meaning and then I was able to make the synthesis" (AN.ii.31). As Jason has pointed out, her story "Winter of Artifice" is not a work "susceptible to Rankian interpretation", rather, it "is a Rankian interpretaion of Nin's relationship to her father"(Mosaic.xi.H.2.84). For Anais Nin Rank was a philosopher and artist and priest rather than an ordinary

Anais Nin

psychoanalyst(5).

In the summer of 1934 Rank told Anais Nin that he had to move to the United States. All of a sudden he had been "ruined financially" (AN.i.342). At first, he did not want to leave. He seems to have felt that in France he had finally begun to live. "My creation is done. I have written enough. I want to live"(6). As we shall see, the "opposition of life and creation" as recorded here in Anais Nin's journal, was a central aspect of Rank's work. But soon New York appeared to him as another "liberation from the past" (AN.i.360). He began to urge Anais Nin to acccompany him. Anais Nin, still recovering from the effects of a miscarriage, realised that it was now Rank who needed her. She decided to go. In New York, she quickly became involved in Rank's world. Staying in the same hotel (the Barbizon Plaza) she helped him as a secretary, as an assistant and confidante.

Though successful as an analyst, Rank felt increasingly anxious about the demands his work was making on him. He sensed that his occupation was swallowing him up. A deep inner crisis resulted. Again Anais Nin's journal finds him saying: "I want to begin to live for myself. I am rebelling against sitting all day in an armchair listening to people's confessions" (AN.ii.10). More than once Anais Nin noted in her diary that she herself caused this crisis - "I had awakened in Rank a hunger for life and freedom"(7). She helped him overcome it. She took on patients of his (and, as we have said, promptly sent some on to Miller who was also in New York at the time). She also advised Rank to find "a better balance between his work and pleasure" - which was more or less what Rank had counselled the average artist some years before in Art and Artist(8). She grew more independent, until eventually she recognised that the analyst's profession was not for her and returned to her husband in Paris(9).

The reasons for Anais Nin's dissociation are various. One was certainly that both her patients -"Their nightmares became my nightmares" (AN.ii.38)- and Rank were apparently demanding too much of her. When she left for Paris, the rupture between Freud and Rank may have been on her mind:

I think I have finally conquered the need of a father. He played the role generously, but he also tried to dominate me and absorb me in his work. He wanted me to devote my life to the rewriting of his books, a lifelong task which would have destroyed the artist in me. He will never forgive me my return to Paris. (AN.ii.46)

In her diaries of the New York period Anais Nin was already expressing doubts about certain of Rank's attitudes, especially his obsessive need to explain everything, to grasp and dissect everything minutely by way of his powerful intellect (AN.ii.34). In these diaries Rank appears more and more as a tragic figure. He was a slave of his profession and of his impulse to write, chronically unable to live out, what he called, his "natural self", and painfully aware of this all the time (AN.ii.37). Still, when Lawrence Durrell, referring to some notes in Anais Nin's diary, spoke of the "collapse of Rank's teachings" (AN.ii.256), this appears to be something of an exaggeration, for even though Rank's psychology underwent remarkable changes in the course of the decade (and according to Anais Nin's journals, under her influence), for the Villa Seurat the 'teachings' of his books remained of vital interest. It was, revealingly, only a few months after Durrell's above remark, that Anais Nin was working on her Rank essay (AN.ii.266) and that, in connection with the Booster issue called "The Air-Conditioned Womb Number", the entire Villa Seurat circle was busy re-reading the Trauma of Birth...

Even if some of Rank's views changed, many of his concepts remained valid for the Booster editors. As late as 1938, long after contact between them had ceased, Anais Nin published in Purpose a tribute to Rank in the form of an article entitled "Creative Principle in Analysis" (Purpose.x.3.147ff). And that part of Winter of Artifice (1939) which was entitled "The Voice" still reflected her high view of Rank's subtle interpretations and understanding. Moreover, in the early 1950s Durrell used a number of long excerpts from Art and Artist to illustrate his own Key to Modern Poetry(10). Still later, a critic risked the hypothesis that Rank was the main intellectual influence on Miller's work, a contention which understandably peeved the old man (Martin 492). It is also true, of course, that when Durrell in Art and Outrage asked about the extent to which Miller was impressed by Rank, he answered:

Yes, dear Otto too. But then you know, after a time it palled. What? This seeking for meaning in everything. So Germanic! This urge to make everything profound. What nonsense! (AO.35)

But then, as we have noted in the introductory chapter on Henry Miller and Anais Nin, Miller himself was greatly attracted in these years by cosmologies of manifold origins and his Hamlet correspondence or his Lawrence book were no less thorough and motivated by an "urge to make everything profound" than Rank's voluminous "Germanic" tomes. Far more than Miller, it was Anais Nin who came to feel "the need to swing away from constant explanations", the pernicious habit typical of "man" which she ascribed to Rank (11).

In 1932/33, in the crucial years of Cancer and Clichy, Rank figured in Miller's list of "life-givers" (Martin 286). In fact, on reading parts of Miller's unfinished book on Lawrence, Rank confided to Anais Nin that he had "found pages in which Henry plagiarized him" (AN.i.334). Rank was not angry and he even admitted that Miller "expressed it better" than himself (AN.i.334). Miller, of course, would have denied too much of an influence, their first meeting having been, as he said confidently, a "mere affixing of the signature to something long ago inspired, envisaged and destined" (LtAN.107). It is difficult to decide. Four years after their first encounter, however, Miller railed against the Viennese "life giver" (just as he attacked Fraenkel, who also figured in that illustrous list):

That too is going into the waste basket in a day or two - I mean The Trauma of Birth. I was rereading portions of it last night - to reassure myself that I had missed nothing by neglecting this ponderous tome, for I had only sniffed at it here and there in the past. I am convinced now that it means nothing to me. I see it now as a grand farrago, a potpourri of idealogical pish-posh. Any theory that a Hottentot might erect on the subject would have an equal, if not a superior, value for me. I see nothing but the ferocious masturbative mechanism of induction and deduction at work. I see no grand truths! I laugh at the naive 'explanations'. This is a mania - explaining things. It goes with a certain type of mind which I abhor.... (Hamlet 214)

Whatever the reasons which provoked this outburst, the waste basket disposal which Miller had in mind in 1936 was a dramatic metaphor and no more. As we have said, the Boosters were rereading Trauma of Birth in autumn 1937 and in any case, Miller did not throw books away, for he always hoped to sell them profitably (Martin 331). In 1937/8 he was advertising books that he had annotated personally, among them Spengler, Nietzsche, Joyce, Emerson and two by Otto Rank...

In the beginning it was Rank's therapeutic method which particularly fascinated Anais Nin and helped her out of a psychical impasse. Rank's thinking was dynamic, flexible, active and inventive, and these qualities put their stamp on his therapeutic work as well. "Otto Rank should not be confused with the other psychoanalysts" began Anais Nin's tribute to her friend and teacher in 1938 (Purpose.x.3.147). Unlike Freudian practice, his therapy was short, intense and undogmatic. Rank had come to disbelieve a premise crucial to conventional psychoanalysis, that a cathartic effect might be achieved by the tenacious attempt to wrest from the past some 'objective' truth. To regurgitate traumatic memories, according to Rank, "served no useful purpose but fixated the patient in the painful situations of the past, leaving him powerless to deal constructively with his current problems"(CAP.480). The analyst's aim ought to be to awaken the neurotic to himself (Taft 282). "I want to reconcile you to yourself", says the "Voice" in Anais Nin's Winter of Artifice, and this meant helping her experience her powers to create. Here is Rank explaining his non-retrospective method to Anais Nin:

> I believe neurosis is like a virulent abscess, or infection. It has to be attacked powerfully in the present. Of course, the origin of the illness may be in the past, but the virulent crisis must be dynamically tackled. I believe in attacking the core of the illness, through its present symptoms, quickly, directly. The past is a labyrinth. One does not have to step into and move step by step through every turn and twist. (AN.i.286)

Rejecting the traditional psychoanalytic relation between therapist and patient, Rank's practice was to leave "to the patient the active role of the creator in the therapeutic process", a distinctly individualistic approach which accentuated the patient's idiosyncracies and his own responsibility rather than any ostensible ideal of nor-

mality(12).

Rank succeeded in helping Anais Nin. This secured him a place in the Villa Seurat pantheon. But it was not only this, not only as Anais Nin said, "his artistic, creative attitude which is contagious and which differentiates him from the scientific analyst" (Purpose.x.3.148). "Rank's writing does not do justice to his ideas", Anais Nin said in 1935. The style of his books was technical, lumbering, awe-inspiring, their translations so inadequate that Rank rightly became obsessed with the idea of working them over, or rather of setting Anais Nin to rewrite then , to "condense and clarify them" (AN.ii.23). Nevertheless, his ideas, manifest especially in his conversation, it would seem, were a source of fascination for Anais Nin and her Villa Seurat friends.

Rank had wanted to become a writer before he met Freud. He continued to think of himself as an artist. For him, the "artist" was any creative personality, whether a musician or philosopher, a poet or a psychologist (Taft 271). His biographer, Jessie Taft, consciously juxtaposed quotations from Art and Artist with descriptions of his own psychical development. Rank told Anais Nin:

> I became interested in the artist. I became interested in literature, in the magic of language. I disliked medical language, which was sterile. I studied mythology, archaeology, drama, painting, sculpture, history. What restitutes to scientific phenomena its life, is art. (AN.i.287)

Tremendous effort and great erudition went into his long and complicated literary and mythological studies, his analyses of great men that reached from Christ to Nietzsche, from Mozart to Wagner and Shakespeare and Ibsen (Taft 271). Das Inzestmotiv in Dichtung und Sage alone is a tome of some 600 pages, and Jessie Taft noted admiringly that "no one has delved more deeply into the incest motive in literature and myth" (Taft 278). Much of this work and many of his theories will have to be left aside here. We can only sketch out some of his ideas on art. What were its origins? What distinguished the artistic personality from the rest of mankind? What was the relation between art and life? These were the questions which Rank searched out in a

number of books, but especially in Art and Artist, which was completed in 1930 but published only in 1932. Without feeling competent to judge whether Rank's generalisations about art and the artist hold true in the light of modern empirical psychology, we will here attempt a simple summary.

In his early works on the artist Rank still subscribed to the Freudian view that the artistic urge was the uncontrollable and inevitable result of a thwarted sexuality (Taft 273). By the time he wrote Art and Artist his view had changed. While he did not deny the existence of a libidinous "life impulse", Rank now recognised the importance of another psychological factor that had been neglected, it would seem, by Freudian analysts. This was the individual will. Rank called it "the psychological factor par excellence"(Taft 273). Rank underlined the importance of the will in Art and Artist and in the more technical Will Therapy of 1936. As the titles of these two works suggest, there existed in his mind a definite nexus between creativity and the will and psychotherapy. Rank said: "art presupposes a voluntaristic psychology" (ORAA.29) and the cure of neurosis also presupposed a voluntaristic psychology.

In Rank's view, the individual will controlled and directed the "life impulse". While not discarding the idea of sublimation altogether, Rank disagreed with the Freudian explanation as to its nature. He argued that the directing of the "life impulse" into art was not an unconscious reaction to some form of external threat (social taboo), nor the result of a purely negative repression of the sexual impulse, but rather a willed and conscious act. He spoke of the "masterful use of the sexual impulse in the service of the individual will" (Taft 274). It was the will which might govern and put to a creative use the sexual impulse. Rank's will was a positive concept which he opposed to the 'negative' Freudian idea of repression and inhibition. "To put it more precisely", said Rank, "I see the creator-impulse as the life impulse made to serve the individual will" (Taft 273).

Anais Nin, too, remarked in her essay "Creative Principle in Analysis" that Rank rejected the idea of a 'negative', unconscious channelling of libidinous energies as an explanation of creativity: "Otto Rank writes against the fallacious belief that because sexuality is biologically fundamental it must play the leading role" (Purpose.x.3.148). The psychology of Art and Artist, in short, assumes the possibility of a "positively willed control"(Taft 274).

What is more, the creative impulse, which characterises the artist, was, according to Art and Artist, not sexual in character. It was rather of a distinctly anti-sexual nature. Rank said that the creator impulse "expresses the anti-sexual tendency in human beings, which we may describe as the deliberate control of the impulsive life" (Rank) (Taft 273). Why was the creative impulse anti-sexual? Rank said that the anti-sexual tendency in the artist was a part of his effort to retain his individuality. It was part of his struggle against the collective (society). The "life impulse" caused in man a desire for immortality, which was normally satisfied biologically by way of "sexual propagation", in other words, in a collective way (Taft 276). The creative person, however, seeks to secure his immortality individually - by way of art. His "will-to-self-immortalization" (Taft 275) is individual. The first step in this willful, individual act is his "nomination", his self-election as an artist:

> he, so to say, appoints himself as an artist, though this is only possible if the society in which he lives has an ideology of genius, recognizes it, and values it ... The creative, artistic personality is thus the first work of the productive individual....(13)

The artistic personality, Rank underlined in direct contradiction of Freud, had nothing whatsoever to do with childhood experience:

> In no case, however, will the individual become an artist through any one experience, least of all through the experiences of childhood (which seem pretty universal)... (Rank)(Taft 276)

The first work of the artist, then, his own individual existence, is to be rendered immortal in art:

For the creative impulse in the artist, springing from the tendency to immortalize himself, is so powerful that he is always seeking to protect himself against the transient experience, which eats up his ego. The artist takes refuge, with all his own experience only from the life of actuality, which spells for him mortality and decay... (Taft 273)

Paradoxically, however, and this is the central aspect of Rankian dualism, the artist's creation also takes him away from life, for there is about art something death-like. The artist was thrown into a curious ambivalence, destined to wander continually and painfully between life and art, between the transience of living and a death-like immortality. Before he began to weary of Rank's need to explain everything, Henry Miller observed: "the conflict lies in the dual aspect of the artist's creativity - creative impulse seeking to express itself in life and in art"(LtAN.109). This is precisely Rank's view. Seeking refuge from the threat of life's decay the artist creates and forms in art, only to find that he has transformed his living experiences into something which is "dead":

For not only does the created work not go on living; it is, in a sense, dead: both as regards the material, which renders it almost inorganic, and also spiritually and psychologically, in that it no longer has any significance for its creator, once he has produced it. (Taft 273)

Once he realises this, the creative person inevitably rushes back into life and experience, the transience of which soon stimulates his urge to create and to "eternalise" once again.

Rank's psycho-portrait of the artist held more in store. Closely linked, for instance, to the artist's difficult desire for individual immortality - as opposed to the usual biological collective immortality, or collective ideological immortality in "religion" (ORAA.16f) - was what Rank called "a much more fateful emancipation" (ORAA.368). This was the struggle of the artist against the artistic Zeitgeist, the "art-ideology" of the time. In connection with Rank's painful dissociation from Vienna, we have quoted some of his ideas on self-liberation. The itinerary of the artist, Rank suggested, was one into and then away from the dominant art-ideology: after subordinating his individuality under some collective ideology, after identifying with

some art-mode and choosing "some recognized master as the ideal pattern", after perhaps even becoming (like Rank) "the representative of an ideology" (ORAA.371), the artist must recover and reassert his individuality:

> he must escape ... from the ruling ideology of the present, which he has himself strengthened by his own growth and development, if his individuality is not to be smothered by it. (ORAA.368)

The title of a crucial chapter in Art and Artist was "The Artist's Fight with Art", and a central aspect of this fight was the struggle against the dominant artistic ideal. The artists must "carve their own individuality out of the collective ideology that prevails"(ORAA.368). Significantly, one of the consequences was, as Rank points out, that "we cannot understand the artist by a purely individual psychology - without taking account of the collective art-ideology" (ORAA.369).

Another trait distinctive of the artistic personality (according to Rank) complicated matters further still. The artist was possessed of a dynamic thirst for absolutes, for wholeness. Rank called this "an over-strong tendency towards totality of experience" (ORAA.373). In this the artist and the neurotic were alike. They were what Rank termed "totalists". If one holds in mind, that the artist was drawn into the world of art, but into the world of experience as well, the 'totality tendency' rendered his predicament all the more painful and dramatic. The totalist's expectations of the experience of life were absolute, but plainly life tends to thwart desires at every turning. The artist,

> in spite of many difficulties and struggles, finds a constructive, a middle way: he avoids the complete loss of himself in life ... by living himself out entirely in his creative work. (ORAA.373)

The neurotic, on the other hand, is persistently frustrated by experience. "The neurotic is one who thinks that human life can be governed like a work of art" said Anais Nin, but this is a misconception. "Art alone is made out of obsession, continuity, absolutism, the desire for complete construction, ending in fulfilment" (Purpose.x.3.151). The neurotic's volition is applied to the realisation

of absolutes in his life and in this he necessarily fails. But according to Rank, there is a cure, for the neurotic is someone "in whom the creative spark exists but is deformed, arrested, feeble, hindered in some way"(AN.i.290). He is a potential artist with a misdirected individual will. Anais Nin:

> Neurosis is created by the truly obsessional insistence on living in terms of one's absolute self, or inner reality. What is right for creation is precisely destructive when applied to human life. It is this creative dictatorship which must be made to flow into creation so that human life can run its human course with natural imperfection. (Purpose.x.3.152)

Art seems the solution to the dynamic thirst for absolutes. But, as we have seen, the artist's 'constructive' solution may lead into a condition no less dangerous than that of losing himself entirely in a life of transience (ORAA.373).

> the 'totality function' of the artist-type in the end makes all productivity, whether in itself or in a particular work, as much a danger for the creative ego as was the totality of experience from which he took refuge in his art. (ORAA.385)

The artist was caught in the dual rush of a "vehement dynamism"

> which forces him equally in the direction of a complete surrender to life and a complete giving of himself in production. He has to save himself from this totality by fleeing now from the Scylla of life, now from the Charybdis of creation.(14)

This was another aspect of "The Artist's Fight With Art", for the artist must seek to free himself not only of some dominant art-ideology, but of his own art as well. The reason was, as Rank came to realise in the end, that he feels that "artistic creation is an unsatisfactory substitute for real life"(Taft 290).

Rank pointed out several ways to escape the absolute demands art made on the artist. One of these was simply to set art aside for a while (ORAA.386). Another we have referred to in introducing Otto Rank himself. It concerns the modern artist's delving into psychology. This allows him to pass "suddenly from the formative artist into the

scientist, who wishes - really he cannot help himself - to establish, or, rather, cannot help trying to establish, psychological laws of creation or aesthetic effect" (ORAA.387). Psychoanalysis and the "cognitive sciences", as well as, one assumes, esoteric systems of all sorts and perhaps even the world of politics, all these were refuges for the creative personality.

But to the artist's diversion into the realm of psychology there were other, more portentous aspects as well. Starting out from the above mentioned notion that a necessary part of the artist's formation was the attachment to, and subsequent freeing from, some art-ideology that had collective relevance, Rank pointed out that the modern artist was in a new situation in so far as there were now no generally accepted art-ideologies. Such art-ideologies were, however, essential, for even if they were eventually rejected or transcended, they still provided the backdrop of self-definition and eventual self-justification, and they made it possible for him to overcome the isolation which resulted from his individualistic premises.

> For unless it has some collective or social basis - for instance, in religion, or, later, the "genius-religion" - artistic creation is impossible, and the last hopeless effort to base it on a psychological ideology not only leads away from art into science, but, even so, fails on points of principle. (ORAA.389)

This, according to Rank, was the dangerous side of the rise of psychology in the twentieth century, for - in Art and Artist - he maintained that a psychological ideology could by definition never be collective. He insisted, "psychology is the individual ideology par excellence" (ORAA.389). For a while, observed Rank, some poets had believed that psychoanalysis might prove a "new artistic ideology". This hope had been in vain. Psychology was no social ideology and, even if widely accepted, for the artist it could not "fulfil and justify his personal conflict" as earlier collective systems had done (ORAA.391). Rank said: "today all collective means fail"(ORAA.391). And so because he still needs an ideological system of reference, the modern artist was "thrown back on to an individual psycho-therapy", which act could only lead into a new psychological impasse and neurosis (ORAA.391).

In his Freudian period, Rank's emphasis had been somewhat different. He had prophesied in his 1905 Der Künstler that the extension of modern man's knowledge of himself would eventually lead to "a collapse of art" (ORAA.375). An increasing awareness of the operations of the unconscious, he said in the earlier book, would necessarily divert the artist's activity from art into science. Art, however, presupposes an unconscious approach; this was prerequisite to art, and so the particular cathartic qualities characteristic of art heretofore would inevitably be lost. Though no longer based on Freudian foundations, the idea of an "ever-increasing preponderance of the psychologically disintegrating over the artistically formative ego" was a crucial factor in Art and Artist as well (ORAA.375). Rank pointed out here that the modern artist's intensely "psychological attitude towards himself and his art" was particularly dangerous as it sunk him ever deeper into a preoccupation with himself:

> His aim is not to express himself in his work, but to get to know himself by it; in fact, by reson of his purely individualistic ideology, he cannot express himself without confessing, and therefore knowing, himself, because he simply lacks the collective or social ideology which might make the expression of his personality artistic in the sense of earlier epochs. ... The more successful his discovery of truth about himself, the less he can create or even live, since illusions are necessary for both.(ORAA.390)

Both Der Künstler and Art and Artist actually ended in a discussion about the possible future of art. This outlook on the future of art was of particular interest to the Villa Seurat authors for it combined in a way not unlike their own, a strong cultural pessimism with a curiously optimistic and utopian hope for a "new human type" beyond a general collapse. Significantly, it was to Rank's thoughts about the possible nature of a post-psychoanalytic art that Lawrence Durrell returned in his Key to Modern Poetry lectures in the early 1950s. He called Art and Artist "the only book I have seen to date which faces the question squarely" (Key 88). Durrell went on to cite long passages from its final paragraphs to indicate a possible answer to the question whether art was "finished for the West" or not (Key 88f). It was, in fact, with Rank's quotations that Durrell concluded his "brief sketch of the artist's preoccupations" (Key 88). Durrell's preoccupations with the future of Western art had not gone beyond Rank, though

this question had been a chief topic of discussion in the darkening months before the outbreak of the Second World War. And even in those days this discussion had been influenced strongly by Rankian concepts and terminology.

As we shall see, the Villa Seurat writers, too, often torn between art and life, had their sights set on an ideal which lay beyond art. Though a definite system of ideas and attitudes not easy to make out, Miller and his friends felt that the modern artist was a transitional being, a type with one foot in the old, disappearing world, and another in a new dimension. Rank shared this view, and the common root might be discovered in Miller's gleeful remark that Rank "had not advanced a step beyond Nietzsche" (LtAN.109)). With varying emphases Rank illustrated this (curiously unrealistic) hope for "a new type of humanity" (Taft 288) beyond the artist in his various studies on art.

In the Freudian Der Künstler, for instance, he said with an almost lyrical optimism that after a period of general hysteria, which had hitherto preceded the ending of every cultural epoch, a hysteria brought about by the ever-increasing and general repression of sexual impulse that accompanies the advance of civilised society, there would now (thanks to psychoanalysis) follow a phase of healing. The artist and the creative individual would become healers and analysts helping a neurotic general public by sovereignly bringing those inappropriately repressed unconscious contents into the light of consciousness and thus neutralising them effectively. This would mean, as we have said, that art in its old 'unconscious' form would no longer be necessary. A healed neurotic, so ran the idea, has a deep and powerful insight into his psyche; suffering has perfected him, and so, as the twenty year old Rank said, the "non-artistic superman, easyful and strong as a 'God' will stand at the centre of the game of life and direct and control his 'impulses' with a sure hand"(15).

In the later Trauma of Birth, Miller's and Durrell's talk of becoming "God" by achieving a womb-like Absolute was anticipated when Rank said: "each individual himself was once 'God' and can be so again, if or in so far as he can reinstate himself into the primal condition". The primal condition was the pre-natal womb condition(16).

In the closing pages of Art and Artist, Rank outlined a possible solution to the artist's impasse, a solution which would lead beyond the taxing dynamic shuttle between Art and Reality, Death and Life, Immortality and Transience. The solution, as Rank came to see it, was to be found in renunciation. The artist was to renounce art and turn his creative energies consciously onto shaping his own life.

> The new type of humanity will only become possible when we have passed beyond this psycho-therapeutic transitional stage, and must grow out of those artists themselves who have achieved a renunciant attitude towards artistic production. A man with creative power who can give up artistic expression in favour of the formation of personality - since he can no longer use art as an expression of an already developed personality - will remould the self-creative type and will be able to put his creative impulse directly in the service of his own personality. In him the wheel will have turned full circle, from primitive art, which sought to raise the physical ego out of nature, to the voluntaristic art of life, which can accept the psychical ego as part of the universe. But the condition of this is the conquest of the fear of life, for that fear has led to the substitution of artistic production for life, and to the eternalization of the all-too-mortal ego in a work of art. For the artistic individual has lived in art-creation instead of actual life ... and has never wholly surrendered to life. In place of his own self the artist puts his objectified ego into his work, but though he does not save his subjective mortal ego from death, he yet withdraws himself from real life. And the creative type who can renounce this protection by art and can devote his whole creative force to life and the formation of life will be the first representative of the new human type, and in return for this renunciation will enjoy, in personality-creation and expression, a greater happiness.(Taft 291)

Oddly, even though Rank actually expressed this recipe for a greater happiness in terms which must have appealed to the Whitman admirer Henry Miller - it ought to be, he said, "a constructive process of acceptance and development of one's individual personality as a new type of humanity" (ORAA.391) - after their first meeting, the American vented his annoyance with Rank's Nietzschean optimism, "the Germanic striving, the dynamic, aggressive, hopeful, wishful thing which always leads the German mind, in the end, into the bogs of hopeless mysticism" (LtAN.109). But in fact, in the later part of the decade, the American too was obsessed with the notion of a post-artistic personality, his work humming with varying conceptions (many of them mystically oriented) of a "new human type", of "a new expression of

the soul" and of turning one's life into a work of art by renouncing art. As he had said after the meeting with Rank in 1933, before a new sphere of art could possibly be entered "there had to be that employment of the creative spirit upon oneself" (LtAN.109). Plainly, a good number of these ideas actually vibrate with echoes of Rank. Indeed, the notion of the artist renouncing art after having found it to be "an unsatisfactory substitute for real life" (Taft 290) crops up again and again in the Villa Seurat letters and essays. In most of these references, renunciation was a first step into "a new realm of being", where one would have, as Miller said in 1938, "no need for art or religion because we shall be in ourselves a work of art"(WoH.92). Alfred Perlès even went as far as to demand the artist's complete suppression, for "as long as mankind is entangled in the roots of art we cannot hope to reach a higher plane of evolution" (RT.55). Of course, mostly the Villa Seurat's fight against art was carried out on type-writers; the course of action, which Durrell described with the words "Rimbaud's solution is always in the air" (Corr.61), was no more than a theoretical (and unlikely) alternative. However, in the chapter entitled "Paris 1939: The Leave-Taking of Henry Miller", an unsuccessful but fascinating attempt at putting into practice Rank's precepts for achieving "a greater happiness" by the renunciation of art will be discussed in some detail. At this point it is interesting to note that in the years before his death Rank too attempted to work a radical change in his life (Taft 290).

Even before coming to New York, as we have said above, Rank had felt that he worked too much and that he had lived too little. Jessie Taft observed that in New York, Rank entered a period of crisis and that this resulted from the feeling that he had failed "to live really in the present" (Taft 290). Anais Nin's diary said: "He had become aware that he had not lived enough" (AN.ii.10). Describing an evening at a Harlem dance hall Anais Nin invoked effectively all the sadness of Rank's life for work:

> Rank said he could not dance. 'A new world, a new world', he murmured, astonished and bewildered. I never imagined that he could not dance, that he had led such a serious life that he could not dance. I said: 'Dance with me'. (AN.ii.6)

It was in New York, in other words, that Rank reached the climax, as Jessie Taft put it, of his striving to find a happier balance between life and creation. In order to rescue his "natural human self" (Taft 292), he attempted to reduce the burden of his work. According to Jessie Taft, in the years which followed only one important work was produced, "obviously the result of a slow internal growth process" (Taft 292). When, however, Anais Nin saw him again for a brief hour in April 1936, she noted that Rank "seems resigned to be working intensely as before, with little time for life" (AN.ii.69). She said: "I felt that Rank was sad and wished he could be free, discard the doctor" (AN.ii.69).

Rank did come very close to discarding the doctor - but it was in his last work, Beyond Psychology. Previously, he had said to Anais Nin that her "philosophy of living is true". And he had added: "It is the one I arrived at - on paper!" (AN.ii.26). If one keeps in mind the close relationship between Rank and Anais Nin, who, incidentally, is never once mentioned in Jessie Taft's biography, it will seem less of a coincidence that in this work, which expresses his conviction that all psychological theories (including his own) are relative and, in the end, inadequate, that despite all rational constructions, the basis of human existence is irrational and therefore beyond explanation, "beyond any psychology, individual or collective"(Taft 293), Rank emphasised again and again the need to accept life.

In the months of their collaboration in the Barbizon Plaza, Rank and Anais Nin were apparently already discussing some of the ideas which emerged in Beyond Psychology, in particular, the notion of an unfathomable irrational basis for all human action, which in the view of Anais Nin was especially true for the manifold rationalisations (and psychological systems) of "man". Anais Nin said:

> Even in the most rational man, there is a fund of irrational motivations which are personal, and belong to his personal past, to his emotional traumas.... Man generalizes from experience, and denies the source of his generalisations.(AN.ii.19).

Curiously, this very realisation (and generalisation) was for Rank apparently, as so often, the outcome of personal experiences. Anais Nin had already come to the conclusion that the reason for Rank's "tragic personal life" was that he did not accept life, but sought to control it, sought to understand it by way of the intellect. His powerful emphasis on the will is eloquent of a dynamic attitude to the world outside. Although she was already highly critical of Henry Miller's monstrous intellectual constructions (which, significantly, she felt belonged into "the world of Spengler and Rank"(AN.i.334)) she nevertheless juxtaposed Miller's attitude of acceptance with Rank's will to control and to understand: "Henry yields, accepts. Rank seeks to change, control. Henry is happier. Wisdom gained from ideas, the effort to control life intellectually is disastrous" (AN.ii.27).

Recalling that she had never liked "his never letting things be", Anais Nin said to Rank at their final meeting: "I don't live by analysis any more, but by a flow, a trust in my feelings" (AN.ii.69). In his last years, according to Jessie Taft, Rank strove for "a new acceptance" of his life, for a "greater spontaneity in living"(15), and so Anais Nin, who taught him how to dance - "And Rank sauntered as if he were learning to walk"(AN.ii.6) - may well have had reasons to read the emphasis on the irrelevance of intellectual systems in Beyond Psychology, the stress on acceptance and life, the essentially non-technical and personal style Rank used, as almost a tribute to their old association and friendship.

> The only remedy is an acceptance of the fundamental irrationality of the human being and life in general, an acceptance which means not merely a recognition or even admittance of our basic 'primitivity', in the sophisticated vein of our typical intellectuals, but a real allowance for ity dynamic functioning in human behaviour, which would not be lifelike without it. (Taft 295)

Notes

1. AN.i.291; FrF.ii.14f.
2. EoP.164; Taft 283.
3. Taft 278; FrF.ii.105.
4. ORAA.375; Taft 284.
5. AN.i.307f,310.
6. AN.i.345,347.
7. AN.ii.10; AN.i.346.
8. Taft 289; AN.ii.10.
9. David Gascoyne found the whole undertaking "frankly quite ludicrous"(Labrys.v.62).
10. Key 88f,72.
11. AN.ii.24,38ff.
12. Taft 124f,138.
13. Taft 272; ORAA.27f.
14. Taft 276f; ORAA.385.
15. Taft 285,292.

VIII. East Europeans and the Villa Seurat : David Gascoyne and Existential Philosophy.

"DRINK PILSENER! IT'S STILL CZECH!". The penultimate Delta, not tactfully entitled the Special Peace and Dismemberment Number with Jitterbug-Shag Requiem, bore the Villa Seurat magazine's only dedication: "This Issue Is Dedicated To Milada Součkova and Zdenek Rykr of Prague". Czech contributions to the Booster and Delta were numerous, but apart from acknowledging the fact that the very first translation of Cancer appeared in Prague in 1938 as Obratnik Raka (with a cover drawing by Matisse), the Czechoslovak connection is sadly neglected by the critics. It is in fact one more example of the Villa Seurat's link to a European art world which extended further than France or Britain. Even if one discounts all their non-artistic Slavic acquaintances, Anais Nin's Russian aristocrats, for instance, or Miller's friend Eugene Pachoutinsky or Perlès' largely anonymous comrades from "the mangled remains of the Austro-Hungarian empire" (MFAP.13), the wider circle around the Villa Seurat included quite a number of emigrés or visitors from the East and the Balkans. Brassai is perhaps the best known of these. Another was Constantin Brancusi, whom Anais Nin became acquainted with in 1935 (AN.ii.47f). Tristan Tzara, the Roumanian ex-dadaist, who has been mentioned before, was an acquaintance of David Gascoyne. And among the Central and East Europeans whom Miller knew were the sculptors Ossip Zadkine, Chana Orloff and Radmilla Djoukic from Belgrade. The latter even sculpted Miller's bust (Martin 316). There were also the Hungarian painter Louis Tihanyi, the Russians Evereinoff of the Moscow Art Theatre and Chaim Soutine, who, as we have pointed out, lived in another of the flats at Villa Seurat 18 (AN.ii.172).

Russia and Eastern Europe were prominent in the Paris of the 1930s, and they were prominent in the artistic universe of Miller and his group; indeed, one often tends to forget that Perlès, the Booster's managing editor, was still a citizen of the Czechoslovak federation. Many other Central Europeans had come to Paris in search of political refuge, freedom from hunger and fear, freedom from anti-semitic outrages, in search of a new life. As far as artists and writers were concerned, however, other motives were often involved. Paris was still for many East Europeans a centre of cultural emigration. In the political slipstream of the Little Entente, that system of alliances which bound the new East European states so closely to France, the visitors and the refugees from Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia and Rumania and Poland gravitated to Paris, more so than to Vienna, Munich or Berlin.

The Villa Seurat links with this group of East and Central Europeans were diverse and involved a great number of writers and artists. As we cannot describe in detail every one of the links we will focus on two aspects, whose importance, held against names such as Brassai and Brancusi, may not be immediately apparent but will presently transpire. First the Villa Seurat's Prague connection will be briefly outlined; secondly, their connection with the Rumanian poet and philosopher Benjamin Fondane will be discussed in some detail.

Most of the Booster contributors from Eastern Europe were Czechs. From the nineteenth century onward Czech and Slovak artists had "journeyed regularly to Munich and, after the middle of the century, in increasing numbers to Paris"(Jíra 1429). Many stayed in Paris for long periods of time and contributed their own particular styles and ideas to the avant-garde scenery. The names (Othon Couline, Emil Filla, Bohumil Kubišta, Josef Sia, František Tichý, František Foltýn) are little known outside specialist circles, but one might point out that the painter František Kupka, "today perhaps the best-known artist of Czech origin", has been said to be "the actual discoverer and creator of abstract art"(Jíra 1433). A Czechoslovak section of the surrealist movement, organised by Jindřich Štyrsky and Madame Toya, though "rooted in the tradition of national domestic art" underlined the close links between Prague and Paris. We have mentioned the surrealist

exhibition of 1935 in Prague (Jíra 1438). Czechoslovakia organised three exhibitions of Czech and Slovak art in Paris between the wars, and it seems that the Booster editors made the acquaintance of Milada Součkova at one of these exhibitions. It was held in 1937 at the Salon des Surindépendents. There were in fact so many Czechoslovak artists and writers in France between the wars that when referring to Czechoslovak art of this period one usually distinguished between "the Paris school" and the school of Prague. Prague itself, the city of Jaroslav Seifert and Kafka and Max Brod, actually resembled Paris in its artistic freedom, its atmosphere of experimentation, its hospitality to political refugees from the surrounding authoritarian states. Contacts between Czechoslovakia and Western Europe, in short, were very close in these years; and one of the Czech authors of the period who was well known in the West was the eminent novelist and playwright Karel Čapek. He was also a contributor to the penultimate Delta.

Čapek, an outstanding democrat and a friend of Thomas Masyryk, was one of the champions of the Republic. By the time, however, his "Le Pélerin boiteaux" was printed in the Villa Seurat review, Čapek was dead. He died in the winter of 1938, heartbroken over the Munich "settlement", disillusioned by the treachery of the West, disgusted with the international world of intellectuals who, as Milada Souckova later wrote, "appeared deaf to his plea for at least verbal support of the threatened Czechoslovak democracy"(1). Miller and his friends probably never met Čapek, though as a young man Miller had been a witness to the Broadway success of Čapek's R.U.R, a prophetic fantasy which warns of the growing discrepancy between mankind's ethical maturity and its technical progress, and which, incidentally, introduced the word "robot" for a mechanical human being.

Čapek was the best known of the four (or five, if one counts Perlès) contributors from Czechoslovakia. Milada Součkova emigrated from Prague to the USA after the Communist putsch in 1948, and became a critic and a historian of Czechoslovak literature at Harvard University. Presumably it was she who obtained for the Boosters Capek's contribution. In the years before the war she was a poet and the author of a novel entitled Amor a Psyche, two fragments of which appeared in the

Zdenek Rykr was perhaps the least known of the Czech Delta contributors, though, according to the Boosters, he exhibited "regularly" at the Surindépendents. Miller and Durrell reproduced in the first poetry Delta a painting which in the words of the editors illustrated the artist's roots in folklore traditions despite his abstract tendencies, a characteristic trait of modern Czech painting, it seems, which is said to be firmly "rooted in the tradition of national domestic art"(Jîra 1438f). The only other painting reproduced in Delta was by Fedor Loevenstein, a painter from Czechoslovakia, who was, however, of German origin (Jîra 1438). Loevenstein, too, frequently exhibited in the Salon des Surindépendents. He came to Paris in 1923. He had studied art in Berlin and in Dresden. He lived in Paris into the war years and "ranked among the foremost artists of the Paris school" (Jîra 1438).

Although it is clear that Czechs formed the largest contingent of East Europeans in the Booster/Delta venture, we must admit that all relevant biographies, diaries and correspondences remain silent about this aspect of the Villa Seurat history. The same would probably also apply to another Balkan contributor to the Villa Seurat review, had he not by chance been one of the truly crucial influences on the spiritual and philosophical development of David Gascoyne. The Roumanian poet Benjamin Fondane, murdered in Auschwitz in 1944, survived in the memory of his friend and pupil David Gascoyne. Fondane contributed to the April 1938 Delta.

The Roumanian was part of the Villa Seurat's wider circle of acquaintance. He was listed in the first poetry Delta's notes on new contributors "Poet and Philosopher. Author of 'La Conscience Malheureuse'. Writes in French" (D.i.25). In Miller's correspondence with Michael Fraenkel there is a reference to another of Fondane's works, the Faux traité d'esthétique. "More books dropped on my table - three on Tibet, one on the Amazon country, translated by my friend Cendrars, a false treatise on aesthetics by a French Jew, a study of geologic drifts, two hermetic books...."(Hamlet 405). In fact, David Gascoyne has written that it was he who brought about a meeting

between Miller and Fondane, probably, as he said in a letter, "because I succeeded in communicating to Miller my enthusiastic admiration of Fondane's Rimbaud le Voyou" (Letter 26th Feb.1983). David Gascoyne continues:

> The only actual meeting between the two that I can remember at all cannot be described as having been an instant success, Miller being exuberantly American and demonstratively Bohemian, Fondane being initially sceptical and reserved to the point of taciturnity, far less willing to attempt to speak English (which he understood) than Miller to speak French (which he did fluently enough but with an accent so strong as to make what he said hard to understand immediately) (ibid.)

If this first meeting between Fondane and Miller was also the last, it is only to be regretted, for, as Gascoyne rightly felt, there were some interesting parallels between Villa Seurat preoccupations and those of Fondane, and it is certainly no coincidence that the ex-surrealist felt drawn both to Miller's circle and into the presence of Fondane as well. Like Gascoyne himself, both Miller and Fondane belonged to the vast delta of romanticism, of the tradition which meandered from Rimbaud across Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to dada and the surrealist experiment. And this river went beyond surrealism as well.

Introducing Benjamin Fondane as a forerunner, Phillippe Arbaizan noted in the voluminous Paris/Paris cataloque that the philosophy of the years 1937 to 1957 laid a particular emphasis on man's existence (Paris 357). The late 1930s saw the dawn of French existentialism. In the summer of 1938 David Gascoyne noted in his journal: "Reading a novel such as Jean Paul Sartre's 'La Nausée' one is forcibly led to speculate on one's own existence"(DG.ii.50). Although stimulated to ask himself whether there had been moments in his life when, as he said, "I have been in immediate contact with existence"(DG.ii.51), Gascoyne's speculations did not finally follow those of Sartre. On the contrary, he later denounced it as academic and Cartesian, as "the post-experimental intellectual exploitation of the experience of existing" (DG.i.127f). Sartre's philosophy, said Gascoyne, was no less than "a perversion of the thought that inspired Kierkegaard and Dostoievsky" (DG.i.129). It had nothing to do, he claimed, with an

existential philosophy, which deserved that name. Genuine Existential Philosophy was something different.

The shadow of war lay heavily on the hearts of many in the decade's closing years, and the theme of man's 'existence' was one of growing urgency. Spending a holiday in Grez sur Loing in the summer of 1938, Gascoyne spoke of the interest he shared with a painter acquaintance of his "in Kierkegaard, Dostoievski and the 'existential' school" (DG.ii.64). A year later he confessed his "ambition to become a 'subjective' thinker, in the Kierkegaardian sense: an 'existential' thinker (to become which first entails becoming a real person with a unique existence)" (DG.ii.135). Some days before that, he noted in his diary: "Creatio ex Nihilo. Rilke's idea of the purpose of mankind on earth being slowly to create 'God' (His transcendentally objective existence)"(DG.ii.125). And, after rereading Nietzsche' January, he began to reconsider "the idea of writing A Man Exists" (DG.ii.123).

For Gascoyne, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoievsky, Rilke and Nietzsche were prime exemplars of true existential thought; the intellectual stimulus which he received from these thinkers and poets, however, was given decisive direction and purpose by two other philosphers. Benjamin Fondane and the Russian Leon Shestov guided the young Englishman's inquiry into the realm of philosophical speculation. From the time they first met, Gascoyne visited Fondane about once a week, and they discussed philosophy. Here, the young ex-surrealist was taught "the fundamentals of what little I know of the subject" (DG.i.16), and these crucial discussions were inspired by the work of Leon Shestov. In point of fact, in an article "Léon Chestov" which was included in his Journal 1936-37 Gascoyne not only paid homage to the Russian whom he never met personally, but also used it to illustrate "the philosophical outlook I had already begun to develop during my pre-war stay in Paris"(2).

Leon Shestov was born in Kiev in January 1866, the son of a Jewish industrialist. He studied law and economics in Moscow, and then turned to philosophical and literary research, publishing in time essays and books on Nietzsche, Tolstoi, Ibsen, Dostoievsky, Czechov, Kierkegaard and Pascal. Nicolai Berdiaiev was his life-long friend(3). Both went into exile some time after the Bolsheviks came to power. Though, according to Gascoyne, he wanted neither disciples nor even a class of pupils (DG.i.131), Shestov, after spending some years in Berlin, taught Russian literature and philosophy at the Institute d'Etudes Slaves at the Sorbonne. He was regarded as an outsider and was not accepted by orthodox philosopical coteries. Still, he was apparently well-received in certain intellectual circles (Jules de Gautier and Charles de Bos) and in 1929 he travelled to Germany where he met Heidegger and Husserl. He died in Paris in 1938.

Among his numerous published works, most of which have remained "relatively unnoticed"(Hyde 62), was Apofeoz bezpoahvennsti (The Apotheosis of Groundlessness) of 1905, which was translated into English by S.S.Koteliansky and appeared as All Things Are Possible in London in 1920. Even before coming across Fondane's study of Rimbaud, Gascoyne had been "greatly impressed" by this fascinatingly destructive excursus into the realms of traditional philosophy and literature, an enthusiasm which D.H.Lawrence had shared many years before; Lawrence himself had contributed the preface to Shestov's book (and so it is not entirely absurd to ask whether one of those 'unprofessional' Lawrence enthusiasts, Miller, Nin and Durrell, might also have heard of or even read All Things Are Possible). Gascoyne's interest, at any rate, grew when he began corresponding with Fondane, whom he later called Shestov's "only disciple".(DG.i.130).

A point which emerges from Gascoyne's 1949 essay on Shestov, is that it is almost impossible to summarise his philosophy. Lawrence said with the necessary emphasis: "He absolutely refutes any imputation of a central idea" (LSAT.10). Still this or that important idea might be singled out for mention. In the simplistic outline which follows, Gascoyne's own study of Shestov may be said to serve as a guideline.

The point of departure of Shestov's philosophy, said Gascoyne, was a moment or a period of dislocation, brought about by some sort of tragic situation where ordinary truths and everyday modes of thinking can no longer offer satisfactory explanations. Anticipating Fraenkel's death fixation, Shestov noted that a sudden awareness of death is such a moment of panic and enstrangement, an awareness which is frantically shunned by modern man. The courageous spirit, the seeker of truth, the wanderer, however, cannot close his eyes to the inevitability of Death. As it was for Kierkegaard and Heidegger ("Mut zur Todesangst"), the acute consciousness of the fact of death was for Shestov the starting point for all philosophy, for questioning all earthly priviliges and existence, for calling into doubt accepted truths and traditions. Significantly, the book which had led Fondane to Shestov was called The Revelations of Death, and one of the revelations was the sudden intuition that simple existence was more important than all intellectual explanations, that these explanations are worthless in the end and that the reason for man's existence must be infinitely mysterious and unknowable(4).

Though in many ways iconoclastic in tendency, Shestov's philosophy did not end in pure scepticism or nihilism. For the awareness of death, the consciousness of the Waste Land around and the indeterminable Angst did not yield to Sartreian disgust or resignation, nor to the apotheosis of the free individual who creates himself out of nothing. Rather, Shestov was led to a spiritual awakening. David Gascoyne quoted from Shestov's "Revolt and Submission":

> As soon as man feels that God is not, he suddenly comprehends the frightful horror and the wild folly of human temporal existence, and when he has comprehended this he awakes, perhaps not to the ultimate knowledge, but to the penultimate. Was it not so with Nietzsche, Spinoza, Pascal, Luther, Augustine, even with St.Paul? (DG.i.135)

After passing through the crisis, painful states of loneliness and desperation, after overcoming the anguish produced by abandoning old alliances and moralities, after what he has called "the greatest spiritual effort to free oneself from the nightmare of atheism and scepticism which posesses mankind"(Hyde 65), Shestov was said to have transcended what is intellectually comprehensible and entered into a spiritual sphere. Unlike Kierkegaard, who described but was unable to execute this step into faith, Shestov apparently succeeded in becoming a non-dogmatic and non-theological believer. His "fundamental thesis", according to John Hyde, was "that man's recognition of the world rests entirely on a transcendent faith that the world is and that one exists in the world"(Hyde 67). To believe therefore meant to exist, and that is the true foundation; to attempt to know that and why one exists, on the other hand, was an illusion.

Distrustful of all absolutes, Shestov's anti-rationalism was not an absolute either. Rejecting completely "the Reason with a deifactory capital R"(DG.i.137), he did not give up the use of logic and reason as intruments of discovery. Nevertheless, he remained painfully conscious of their limitation as concepts for explaining man's existence(5). David Gascoyne quoted from All Things Are Possible:

> To discard logic as an instrument, a means or aid for acquiring knowledge, would be extravagant. Why should we? For the sake of consequentialism? i.e. for logic's very self? But logic, as an aim in itself, or even as the only means to knowledge, is a different matter. Against this one must fight even if he has against him all the authorities of thought beginning with Aristotle.(6)

Closely linked to a scepticism about the bewitching powers of ratiocination, was his anti-idealism which asserted not only the essential difference between ideas (which are at best approximations of reality) and that true reality which they claim to reflect, but also the fact that ideas tend toward dominating and imprisoning man. In "Sur le Balance de Job", an article published in Mesures in 1936, Shestov observed unequivocally:

Le plus terrible ennemi de tout ce qui est animé, ce n'est nullement la matière inerte... L'ennemi le plus terrible, le plus implacable, ce sont les idées. (Mesures.ii.2.25)

Ideas and ideals, both were regarded as inhibitive and as distortions of reality. Understandably, it was this aspect which Lawrence dwelled on in his preface to All Things Are Possible, and which would have caught the Boosters' attention, had they been familiar with Shestov. "European idealism is anathema", Lawrence wrote, and he added: "Away with all ideals. Let each individual act spontaneously from the forever-incalculable prompting of the creative well-head within him. There is no universal law" (LSAT.10). As we shall see in our discussion of the Booster editorials, it was a similar anti-idealism, albeit less sophisticated, which lay hidden behind utterances like: "The world is what we are and not what we would like it to be" (B.i.5). What is required, said Shestov, is a conscious anti-idealism, a constant inner vigilance in the face of the intellectual patterns formed by one's own experience and by those conceptions handed down by education, literature, philosophy. "All Things Are Possible" was the programmatic title, and ideas and ideals curtailed possibility. There was a war raging between the real and the ideal, and it was a war which the Boosters were conscious of as well: "Une lutte terrible se déroule, une lutte entre la vie et la mort, entre le réel et l'idéal" (Mesures.ii.2.25).

In a letter to Berdiaev, Shestov asserted the freedom inherent in "All Things Are Possible" and pointed out its foundation in belief:

If, in the wake of Böhme, you claim that without a 'no' there can be no 'yes', you place the truth of reason above Revelation for ever and finally. But the Holy Scriptures say that nothing is impossible for you if you believe in a mustard seed. And God can say 'yes' without saying 'no', and for God freedom is possible both for Himself and for His creatures. You do not have to ask whether God is good, for whatever emeanates from Him is good. This is what the Holy Scriptures teach. We do not understand it, but we do not have to understand it either. One just has to get used to the freedom of thinking without anything a priori and to the freedom of not feeling that truth can only be what seems possible to our comprehension.(7)

Never once was Shestov actually mentioned in Gascoyne's Paris journal. However, from his tribute to the Russian, which was first issued in Connolly's Horizon in October 1949(8), there surfaces a deep and intense sympathy for the Russian. In these later years Gascoyne identified his own beliefs with those of Shestov. He admitted that his tribute might possibly be "a misrepresentation of him resulting from my having used Chestov's name merely as a cover under which to pass off some idea or attitude of my own" (DG.i.139). And there were good reasons for this alignment. Gascoyne's journals are paradigm examples of the desperate spiritual itinerary which Shestov's own work describes. The stations of painful self-questioning and dislocation, of isolation and doubts, of uncertainties and depression, the anguish of exile and frustration are passed. Again and again the young Englishman describes a terrible awareness of what he called the Pit - "The Void, das Nichts, Nada, le Néant" (DG.ii.126). An atmosphere of Angst runs through pages of the diary. Occasionally there appears the hope of "getting beyond despair without illusion or dishonesty" (DG.ii.125). And indeed, after his season in hell, in Jouve's monde désert, ever more aware of the "frightful horror and the wild folly of human temporal existence" (Shestov) (DG.i.135), there finally emerges something like the Shestovian sense of existence, a new faith, which expressed itself in a sudden absence of alienation and the passing into a condition of certainty, a state which culminates in the exalted "I am" of the summer of 1939 (DG.i.140). His admiration for Shestov, "a Voice crying in the Wilderness his whole life long" (DG.i.128), was that of one wanderer for another: "I belong to the same category of men as the Wandering Jew, Don Juan (not in the vulgar 'amorous' sense, but spiritually) etc"(DG.ii.47). It is probably no coincidence that in the closing pages of the Paris journal Gascoyne described himself as "a voice crying in the Wilderness" (DG.ii.129). The subtitle of Kierkegaard and Existential Philosophy, one of Shestov's last works, was Vox Clamantis in Deserto...

Benjamin Fondane was born in 1898 in Iasi in Moldavia, a drab stretch of land which E.M.Cioran has called "the paradise of neurosis". An aspiring and well-known journalist in Bucharest, a literary critic and a playwright, who even directed his own theatre company, he had come increasingly under the spell of the powerful cultural impulses coming from France. As John Hyde pointed out, in Roumania "French culture was everywhere admired and imitated" (Hyde 11). Like Tristan Tzara's, Fondane's "intellectual formation was almost entirely French" (Hyde 12). He had soon become conscious of a time-lag, separating Roumanian cultural developments from those of France, and so finally in 1923 he emigrated to Paris, a decision which might have been influenced in part by a growing anti-semitism in his homeland. In Paris he soon caught up with the dominant artistic and literary modes, and, having been introduced to Tzara by the poet Ilarie Voronca, he witnessed at close range dada's transition to surrealism. More momentous, however, was his discovery of Shestov's Les Révélations de la mort, which he read in French (though Cioran reports that Shestov was well known in Roumania in the years between the wars (EMC.55)). The acquaintance with Shestov not only directed his attention to the sphere of philosophical enquiry of a metaphysical kind (Hyde 13), but also initiated a protracted spiritual crisis. The Russian became his tutor. Aside from articles on various artists and writers (Brancusi, Chagall), Fondane published numerous essays and notices on Shestov, trying to bring him to the notice of a wider public. In time, he was in a good position to do so, for he directed the section on contemporary philosophy in the influential Cahiers du Sud. We have mentioned David Gascoyne meeting him at a Cahiers du Sud dinner in November 1938: "Spoke to Benjamin Fondane, who seemed a little out of place, but was very pleasant, as he always is" (DG.ii.90).

But Fondane experimented in other fields as well. He was involved in motion pictures, having travelled to Argentina to present avant-garde films in 1929. Some years later he wrote the scenario for Rapt (1933), a film adapted from Ramuz's novel La Séparation des races. This was directed by Dimitri Kirsanoff, with music by Arthur Honegger. It was not a success. A few years later, he returned to Argentina in order to direct Tararira, the script of which he himself had written. It was never shown in Paris. His film work and his critical studies apart,

Fondane continued to write poetry. In 1933 the collection Ulysses appeared, and in 1937 a long apocalyptic poem entitled Titanic.

Rimbaud le Voyou, his "highly subjective, even subversive interpretation of Rimbaud"(Hyde 25), was published in 1933. Gascoyne, himself working on a book on Rimbaud, was fascinated by this study and expressed his admiration and "sympathy and intuitive affinity with his underlying point of view" in a letter to Fondane in 1937 (DG.i.15). Reviewing another book on the poet of Une Saison en enfer in the Criterion later that year, he called Fondane's book: "a thoroughly convincing study of Rimbaud considered as an expression of the Occidental metaphysical temperament"(Criterion.xvii.66.158). 1936 had seen the publication of La Conscience malheureuse. Fondane sent this collection of essays to England in 1937 in reply to Gascoyne's first letter, along with an invitation to call on him should he ever be in Paris. They met that summer, and the tuition in existential philosophy began.

In the winter of 1938, Shestov died. Gascoyne was told by Fondane. "I vividly remember a chance meeting with him ...in the snow, half-way up the Blvd. St Michel, when all that he said, expressionlessly, was: 'Chestov est mort'"(DG.i.16). This encounter, as Gascoyne later told Cioran, haunted him for months (EMC.60). It was in those days that Fondane, who had become a French national, completed the Faux traité d'esthétique. This work, which was dropped on Miller's desk (probably by Gascoyne), was eloquent of the direction Gascoyne's poetics were moving in, as it illustrated and defended "the metaphysical aspect of poetry's inspiration and expression"(Hyde 45). By the time the war broke out Fondane had completed a long essay entitled "Lévy-Brühl et la métaphysique de la connaisance"(Hyde 16). After serving in the French army and following his subsequent imprisonment in the summer of 1940, Fondane stayed in Paris and continued to work there, although as a Jew he was in mortal danger. He refused to escape to Argentina when he had the chance, for he did not want to leave his wife and sister behind. Eventually he was betrayed and arrested by the Gestapo. From the camp of Drancy he was deported to Auschwitz, where he was gassed to death and cremated in October 1944 (Hyde 17f). David Gascoyne noted:

David Gascoyne

I wrote a poem addressed to him before I knew of his death, but for me it now serves as my own memorial to him, as it attempts briefly to express the essence of his thought, a philosophy which I believe and trust will have helped him befittingly to accept and endure his terrible end. (DG.i.17)

Like most of his contributions to Delta, David Gascoyne's memorial to Fondane is included in his Collected Poems under the heading "Metaphysical poems". The fact that it was written and published at a time when Gascoyne and Fondane were still discussing philosophy in the latter's shadowy apartment near the Arènes des Lutèces by the light of "an illuminated aquarium set in the wall"(DG.i.16), does not change much. Neither its character as a memorial, nor its short hand notation of Fondane's main ideas are in any way diminished.

To Benjamin Fondane

This is the osseous and uncertain desert
And in the valley of death's shadow, where the desired
Sweet spiritual spring is sought for
But unfound.
It is beyond
And far, and lost in the essential blue
Of space, among the rock and the snow, the locked
Domain the instinct asks for. They who wait
Without the great thirst of despair are cursed;
And they who quench their thirst in death
Shall fall asleep among the mirages. But the
Inspired and the unchained and the endowed of desperate grace
Shall break through the last gate, by violence take
God's Kingdom, and attain the certain State.

Of the Shestovian echoes (the sense of universal alienation, the utter incomprehension in the face of death, the desire for spiritual comfort and certainty, the dry, illusory world of temporal reality, the active need to work for enlightenment) we will briefly discuss three in order to outline some of Fondane's ideas and what they meant to David Gascoyne: first, the essential role of despair, then, his ideas of Shestov's act of transcendence, and lastly, his thoughts on a primitive and pre-logical perception of reality.

A striking feature both of this poem and of Gascoyne's journal is the fact that despair and anguish, states of mind which one is usually apt to evade, were considered prerequisite to grace. Gascoyne on Fondane's first letter:

> I particularly remember him saying that despair was for him not an end in itself or something he would advise anyone to go through, but rather, as it were, a way of making a clean sweep of all illusion, of reaching rock bottom, and thus a preparation for an ultimate building anew and re-discovery of faith. (DG.i.16)

Considering David Gascoyne's growing existential dejection in the mid-decade London years, this notion of something positive beyond despair left a deep impression, conveying hope - and paradoxically the desire to experience suffering to the full. This psychical tendency was also characteristic of Fondane, who, according to Cioran, revealed a dangerous fascination for the tragic. He seemed even to have come to accept the role of the victim, avoiding many necessary precautions in his clandestine years during the Occupation (EMC.57). David Gascoyne, too, shared a propensity for the tragic; the elated note of the new "certain State" on which David Gascoyne's Paris Journal ended, did not mean that his sufferings were over: "you ask for trouble; your destiny can only be a tragic one..."(DG.ii.38). Miller's words to Gascoyne were to prove in time all too prophetic...

Gascoyne's hope and even certainty that there was something beyond despair, beyond "the osseous desert", may explain why Sartre's sombre tones in La Nausée did not strike a lasting sympathetic chord in him. Even before coming to Paris, even before Fondane's first letter about the new building of faith, or reading Rimbaud le voyou as an expression of the "Occidental metaphysical temperament", Gascoyne had noted in his diary:

Am I really religious? Am I in exile, yearning for some ridiculous, yes, some absurd assurance of a sustaining power to which I might one day return, as to an old forgotten lover's arms, still faithful after years and years of absence? (DG.i.69)

Surrealism and socialism had not succeeded in defining a role for him, which would take into account and even give a purpose to his own protracted suffering. Gascoyne offered in the Horizon article on Shestov a programmatic statement about his own inner trajectory. He was speaking of Shestov but, as the echoes of "To Benjamin Fondane" show, he might have been speaking of his Roumanian teacher and friend as well:

He is the philosopher of Tragedy and of Paradox; a seeker after the 'one thing needful', a solitary thinker whose despair does not counsel us to come to terms with defeatist resignation, but can inspire in those capable of it the violence with which alone is the kingdom of Heaven to be taken. (DG.i.143)

Shestov's act of transcendence, to which this passage bears an obvious relevance, was, in the philosophy of Fondane, the apex of all existential endeavour. It was this act which Gascoyne referred to when he spoke of breaking through "the last gate" or of "taking the Kingdom of Heaven", and it was this step which, in the view of Fondane and Gascoyne, took Shestov beyond rationalism and idealism, beyond the need to explain or to justify man's existence.

In his collection of essays La Conscience malheureuse, Fondane analysed what he considered the failure of traditional Western philosophy to alleviate human suffering (Hyde 33). He made out two main misconceptions; the first was that philosophers have generally sacrificed "the human desire to be to the human desire to know" (Hyde 34) and the second, that they have "come to equate the understanding of reality with the nature of reality itself"(Hyde 34). Scrutinising a number of thinkers who were felt to have revealed a consciousness of the problem of human existence, Fondane came to the conclusion that only one of them, Leon Shestov, did not abandon the quest for a truly Existential Philosophy in the end. Husserl, Bergson, Freud and Heidegger were at the bottom of Fondane's ladder, for, in the words of John Hyde, "they are forced sooner or later to have recourse to those very

procedures which they are intent upon devaluating", intellectual procedures, needless to say (Hyde 36). Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Gide on the other hand were granted a vision beyond rational boundaries, but they proved incapable of following it up. Only Shestov, in Fondane's eyes, finally reached a new spiritual awareness(9). It was only the actively courageous who would step into real being (the existence of a believer), those with "the great thirst of despair", those "endowed of desperate grace".

Fondane's views on the primitive perception of reality were directly linked to the Shestovian insistence that ratiocination bars the way to a direct and unfalsified awareness of reality. There were various modes of an unflawed vision of reality, one of which was the believer's, by definition an existent and thus in direct contact with reality around him. In his Shestov essay, for instance, Gascoyne spoke of achieving a "really transparent knowledge of the world which scientific knowledge decomposes" (DG.i.136). More in line with conventional romantic attitudes, and with those of the Boosters, of course, was the assumption that a madman possessed the faculty of immediate apprehension (Hyde 35). Another example for non-rational intercourse with existence Fondane discovered in the psycho-anthropological study by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl entitled La Mentalité primitive, which we have mentioned before in our chapter on Miller and Durrell and the mythopoeic imagination. In his essay on Lévy-Bruhl, Fondane discussed the wider implications of the notion that in the primitive mind, which is pre-logical and naturally religious, no distinction is made between the subjective world and the objective world, and consequently the experience of reality is direct and whole, "the locked Domain the instinct asks for" is freely accessible. The emphasis is on the word "instinct".

Fondane was a poet-philosopher, and his ventures into the different fields of human experience all seem to lead back to his ideas on the nature of poetry, the basis of which is once again the unbridgeable gap between "the direct experience of reality and the intellectual process of conceptualizing the experience of reality"(Hyde 71). Each of these modes of thought - direct apprehension and intellectual perception - has its own "vehicle of expression" as John Hyde put it (Hyde 74): the latter's is discursive language, while the former expresses itself in what Fondane called the cri, "the shout of joy or sorrow"(ibid.). The cri is said to be identical with the experience which has provoked it. It is not intelligible but an integral part of existence itself. Discursive language on the other hand is an agent of the intellect. It has no connection with reality itself and is thus quite without meaning. In theory there is no touching point between the two modes. In practice, however, Fondane points a way out of the impasse. Poetry, he argued, reduces "discourse to a minimum, using just enough of it to insure comprehensibility", while at the same time, exalting "the 'cri' to a maximum, thereby assuring the optimum of meaningfulness"(Hyde 75). The poem is the only bridge, a compromise between life and thought. In Fondane's opinion, a poem cannot be the result of a willed act but must come with unfathomable necessity in a moment of intense existence. Without actually formulating a theory for poetic composition Fondane was decided about what constitutes genuine poetry and what does not. Only when a poem is the result of a moment of existence, the product of moment of a sudden convergence between subject and object, the cause of which is forever inexplicable, can one speak of authentic poetry. For Fondane the experience which the poem translates (however approximately) is at the centre of creation, not the poetic document itself. The poem is no more than a "bon conducteur du réel"(Hyde 75).

It has been said that Fondane's works were typical of "intellectual currents in vogue at the time he wrote"(Hyde 130). His interests closely parallel those of the multiple heirs to the romantic movement; indeed, he stood with Gascoyne and with the Boosters at the colourful fringe of surrealism. There are many paralells between these divergent writers, not in the least their similarly ambivalent attitude to the orthodox surrealists around Breton. "In many respects Fondane's

theories can be inscribed within the circle of the surrealist ideal" (Hyde 80). But Hyde also pointed out where Breton and the Roumanian parted company, and the echoes of the Villa Seurat's criticism of orthodox surrealism are evident. Surrealism represented for Fondane an attempt in the direction of a new "body of knowledge" (Hyde 81). The notion, he said, that through the unconscious, through non-reason one might arrive at a definite knowledge of the universe, was no less a cognitive endeavour than any rational analysis. It necessarily entailed all the moral and aesthetic restrictions which, in the view of Fondane, were part of any intellectual construction. Like his friend and teacher Shestov, Fondane abhorred the notion of definite truths (EMC.59). More specifically, the surrealist stress on automatism, the idea, for instance, that the poetic manuscript was inviolable, was rejected by Fondane, who saw no reason not to use his poetic craftsmanship as long as it served to allow the reader to participate in the essential cri experience. Just as Miller's non-conformist surrealism in Black Spring may well have helped Gascoyne to dissociate himself from the more orthodox stream by showing that other forms of spontaneous writing were possible, Fondane's particular critique of surrealism seems to have impressed him as well. Speaking of the once admired Breton, Gascoyne said in 1937: "on account of the train of thought aroused by my work on Rimbaud, became keenly critical of his pretensions, sceptical of his undertaking (Fondane)" (DG.ii.20).

But it was not only Fondane's fabulous talk, his long expoundings of Shestov's philosophy, nor the freedom his post-surrealist poetics seemed to offer, which had drawn Gascoyne to the Roumanian. His thought, his themes of anguish and pessimism, of contingency and absurdity, pointed, as Gascoyne must have sensed, beyond the surrealist universe into a darkening future. John Hyde said that Fondane stood at the crossroads between surrealism and existentialism. Interestingly, it was here that Miller too has been sighted. One critic, Sydney Finkelstein, actually argued with a certain persuasiveness that the author of Cancer was not merely a precursor but an existentialist himself.

What brings Miller to an existentialist position is his search for some human basis for living, which he can assert in the face of a world he regards as inimical and absurd. If he is not an existentialist, this is only because it is an explicit philosophy and he does not bother with philosophies.(3Dec.126)

This view seems exaggeration, and in the introduction to the collection of essays on Miller called Three Decades of Criticism, Edward Mitchell pointed out what distinguished Miller's view from that of the French existentialists. It has some bearing on what distinguished him from the other post-surrealists, David Gascoyne and Benjamin Fondane, as well.

The existential position is characterized by the view that the universe is indifferent or possibly even inimical to man. Man's existence therefore is one of necessary cosmological alienation - it is a given of the human condition. Miller, in contrast, finds that reality is indifferent to man only in so far as reality is a process which executes its own laws with or without man's awareness of it. While Miller would agree that man is at present alienated from reality, he repudiates the premise that cosmological alienation is a necessary condition of man's existence. (3Dec.xvii)

For Miller, alienation and anguish were signs of individual incompleteness, conditions which might be remedied in this world by an awakening of the 'self', an awakening to and acceptance of the operations of the universe. At first, this seems to approximate to Shestov's transcendent leap into belief. Indeed, Miller's awakening to the 'self' was often described in mystical and religious terminology. It was also depicted as following upon a period of despair that had led to a rock-bottom. Indeed, at times one almost perceives in Miller's more discursive writings echoes of Fondane's and Gascoyne's 'authentic' existential philosophy, "that manifestation of the movement which has looked towards poetry and the mystic experience rather than towards prose and the social experience in the attempt to situate 'l'humaine condition' in the concrete, immediate and tragic experience of reality"(Hyde 130f). But in spite of some seeming similarities, there were differences between Fondane and Gascoyne on the one hand and the Villa Seurat circle on the other that were no less than categorical.

Importantly, David Gascoyne's mystical and poetic orientation did not exclude man the a social being (his "Ecce Homo" significantly invokes the "Christ of Revolution and Poetry"). Miller's romantic quietism, his Whitmanesque acceptance, led him away from society, from his fellow human being in a most radical way. "Be ever on the alert, he warns, if you are a wild goose. Never commit yourself to the tame geese", Miller said of Kierkegaard (NR.cviii.19.642f). Gascoyne on the other hand would always insist on his responsibility for common humanity. This question, the relation between the artist and society, will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on the Booster editorials.

Though it is difficult to speak with certainty about Miller's conception of the spiritual due to the contradictoriness and vagueness of his utterances, one would not be too far off the mark by saying that if Miller was a religious writer, as Durrell sometimes contended, his religion was more mundane, oriented on self-apotheosis, probably psychological in essence. Again, Kierkegaard was for Miller "a man of God" and "a heroic psychologist" (NR.cviii.19.642). The concept of salvation was rooted in the idea of individual wholeness, and this idea, however hazy, was optimistic and non-transcendental. Though Gascoyne and his existential tutors too believed that alienation was not a necessary condition of existence, hence the "Christ of Revolution and Poetry", their vision of man's worldly estate was tragic. The world was a desert and whatever hopes they entertained were transcendental. As we shall see in the chapter on the Booster editorials, Miller and his inner circle thought differently. Perhaps David Gascoyne's criticism of Durrell's "complete materialism, if not atheism at the time" (Labrys.v.67) is easier to understand if one sees that despite their anti-rationalism, despite their ample drawing on religious and mystical terminology, a truly metaphysical dimension may be said to have been lacking in their writing, if the term is used to designate a world of the spirit existing outside and above the 'self'.

Miller and Durrell certainly regarded themselves in terms similar to the ones Gascoyne chose for Rimbaud, "an expression of the Occidental metaphysical temperament" (Criterion.xvii.66.158). The third Booster editorial proclaimed that "in order to assemble the fractured pieces of the world two things were necessary: "faith, and the ability to laugh"(B.iii.5). What distinguished Fondane and Gascoyne, both isolated and essentially lonely figures, was not only the singular emphasis they put on a condition of anguish, not only that they considered the cause of this despair to be forever unknowable, a spiritual category which existed beyond the comprehension of man, but also the tragic note that ran through their art. Here, there was no laughter, no "happy life of shame". What set the Boosters apart from anguished souls like Fondane and Gascoyne was not so much the fact that for them evil, or as Durrell put it, the "negative element", was more a quantifiable psychological condition than anything else. It was not their dualistic view that evil was an aspect of life which had to be accepted, and, once accepted, would be robbed of its fearsome aspect. Rather, as we shall see in the chapter on the Booster editorials and on contemporary reactions to the Booster, it was their cheerful, almost frivolous levity of tone. They were comedian mystics and different not only from most political artists of the age, but from writers like Gascoyne, Shestov and Fondane, who responded relgiously to the horror and sufferings of the age. Their faith was of this world and required laughter: "We are with God all the time, boosting his handiwork, assisting him, giving him a hand" (B.i.5).

Notes

1. MSLS.49,56.
2. DG.i.15. Gascoyne uses the French spelling "Chestov", which suggests that his access to the philosopher was by way of French rather than of English translations.
3. Kontinent.xxiii.143-160.
4. Hyde 40; Kontinente.xxiii.152,158.
5. Hyde 65ff; DG.i.137.
6. DG.i.142; LSAT.116.
7. My translation. Kontinent.xxiii.158.
8. Horizon.xx.118.213-229.
9. Hyde 36-40.

iii. THE BOOSTER/DELTA NEXUS

A. THE BOOSTER

I. Preludes to the Booster : The New Instinctivism, Eos and Other Schemes.

The preceding part of this thesis has described some of the terrain around the Booster and Delta, the Villa Seurat's venture into the world of small magazine publishing. The first section introduced some of the main protagonists, discussing the formative relationships which existed between Henry Miller and his closest associates with a particular regard to the question of 'exile'. The second section examined aspects of the Villa Seurat as an entity, as a literary group. The third attempted to place Miller's circle in a wider socio-cultural context, pointing out connections and similarities with other relevant literary-artistic groupings and individuals. If until now the Booster itself has not been a central topic of discussion, there is a simple reason; even in its boom days in the autumn of 1937, it was not the absolute centre of interest at Miller's studio either....

The magazine was certainly no sine qua non for the existence of the Villa Seurat circle. It was an important, though not a centrally decisive factor in that long and ever-shifting process of cross-inspiration and influencing, of collaboration and mutual assistance which ran through the Parisian decade of Henry Miller and his friends. Aspects of this extensive collaboration have been indicated in the above chapters; the more substantial ingredients of the group formula were singled out for comment under the heading "Manifestations of Group Cohesion and Solidarity". Many of these instances of literary cooperation were not occasional or isolated phenomena. They were rather closely linked, the one leading to the next, until eventually an intricate mesh emerged, a pattern which naturally did not halt at the boundaries of literary endeavour. In that web which encompassed the most subtle of intellectual influences as well as the very basic instances of meals cooked and curtains mended, some elements were

obviously more directly related than others. Moreover, Miller, Durrell and Perlès were engaged together in working on and concocting schemes for a number of publications before the Booster project itself crystalised. It is with these proto-types, some of which have been referred to before, that this chapter will be concerned.

There are many reasons for starting a little magazine, and most little magazines are launched for more reasons than one. The colourful and contradictory melee of motivation often reaches from the openly proclaimed desire to create a publishing outlet for experimental writing which commercial publishers were certain to reject, to the more private wish to satisfy one's vanity revelling in self-indulgent exhibitionism. The former ideal was that to which many little magazines aspired, thousands, it would seem, coming out in the last 100 years or so, like shooting stars, only to vanish again without a trace, about 2500 of them, it has been estimated, in the United States alone(1). The ideals were as lofty as the average standard was poor, a fact which did not prevent many editors from launching their reviews with a maximum of clamour, pomp and pretension. Conceived, in a way, as a blast against such flatulent declarations and grandiloquent manifestoes was The New Instinctivism of Alfred Perlès and Henry Miller. We have had occasion to mention it before.

Temporarily in charge of the New Review in 1931, the two friends decided to 'improve' a number which Samuel Putnam had naively asked them to see through the press. Putnam was on vacation in New York. Perlès and Miller seized the opportunity to add to the new issue some specimens of their own writing. But they did more than that. It was as a protest against Putnam's high view of Ezra Pound and James Farrell, two writers whom they did not like, that Miller and Perlès laughingly rearranged the entire magazine, with the express aim of sabotaging it, of running it into the ground, as they said, "a fitting end for a magazine that had paid too much attention to their enemies" (Ford 320). They threw out several poems, "a tedious involved essay about the Revolution of the Word or some such subject" (MFHM.34), and a story by Robert McAlmon (a writer whom they found particularly objectionable). They swept over and ordered anew much of the remaining content. Perlès contributed an essay on Rilke (later reprinted in the

T'ien Hsia Monthly) to which Miller himself added several lines. "I never read Rilke", Miller wrote to Emil Schnellock: "But I think after what I wrote, that he must be wonderful" (Martin 233). As Perlès recalled: "Somehow we succeeded in transforming Putnam's tedious highbrow review into a lively and readable magazine"(MFHM.34). And, referring to a friend who peddled pornography to Anglo-American visitors to Paris, he added that "Eve Adam would have no difficulties selling (it) to the American tourists" (ibid.).

As a give-away supplement to this newly reviewed New Review Miller and his Austrian friend threw in a spoof 'manifesto' which was called The New Instinctivism, "a wild, exuberant, anarchic pamphlet written not so much on the lines of preceding manifestos (Dadaism, Surrealism, etc.) but rather a parody" (MFHM.34). Their rebellious tract demanded "nothing more and nothing less than being for or against - instinctively"(Martin 234).

> It started out with a violent, bombastic declaration of independence to be taken as 'a gob of spit upon the face of humanity', etc., followed by page after page of dogmatic pronunciamenti, axioms, dicta, maxims and epigrams dealing with every subject under the sun from boot laces to les maladies des voies urinaires. (MFHM.34)

Announcing the imminent publication of a New Instinctivist Bible, they said they were against the New Review, against all -isms, and this included, of course, their own 'New Instinctivism'...

Unfortunately, Putnam heard about his lieutenants' destructive activities as the issue's bulk and some of the expressions used (not "the most delicate language", in Perlès' phrase) had made the printers suspicious(2). Putnam, "genuinely grieved", was unable to prevent the printing of the New Review, which appeared as Miller and Perlès had edited it. However, he did suppress the 'New Instinctivist' manifesto, the proof copy of which has sadly disappeared along with the manuscript itself. In his memoirs Perlès observed true to the spirit of the thing:

> Not that the New Instinctivism was important; it was a joke and we treated it as such, without the least trace of the nauseating gravity so peculiar to manifestos of literary movements. (MFHM.35)

Actually, years later it almost seemed as if The New Instinctivism would appear in print after all. At a time when the Booster's financial backbone appeared strong enough to support the publication of a series of pamphlets, entitled the Booster Broadsides, Miller and his friends wanted to issue their old tract (subtitled A duet on creative violence, 1930). Before this scheme could be realised, however, Miller and Perlès (and the other Booster editors) had already succeeded in the objective they had set themselves in their editorials, which was, as in the New Review prank, to run the magazine into the ground as quickly as possible....

The New Instinctivism was an important precursor. Although the duet on violence was vociferously against almost everything, whereas the Booster was "for things rather than against"(B.i.5), the rebellious and lusty tone of the Booster editorials closely approximated that of the earlier manifesto. Symptomatically, it was the 'New Instinctivist' coup which came to the mind of Perlès when he explained to Miller about the magazine he had just been given (the Booster): "Remember what we did to Putnam's New Review as guest editors? We're no longer guest editors - we're editors now"(MFHM.168). And he went on to say: "What we did to Putnam's magazine, we can do to our own, and worse, and with impunity" (ibid.).

If The New Instinctivism was a fore-runner, an anticipation of the burlesque and unconventional sides of the Booster undertaking, the Eos episode gave a foretaste of the more serious, organisational and financial aspects of the Villa Seurat review. Eos was the title of a "quarterly calendar" which Durrell and friends had planned to launch in Corfu in 1936. Unlike that unique New Review abduction, there was evidently nothing dramatically unusual about the planning for Eos. The magazine never actually materialised and it was only in passing that Durrell mentioned to Miller the abortive project. He said that he had intended to ask him and Fraenkel and Saroyan and some others for material. But then, as Durrell put it, the Greek authorities, "the

fascists intervened with a comic economic law" which made it more or less impossible to send printed matter out of the country (Corr.34). With a certain regret and characteristic modesty he added: "Pity, since we had the best poets and writers of everywhere, including Greece"(ibid.).

Miller's reply bespeaks his imaginative, if mostly ineffective, resourcefulness in finding publishing outlets. He wanted to revive the idea of Eos, to encourage Durrell and his comrades by offering advice and help. Revealingly, not a single line in his reply deals with the magazine's future editorial policies or its content. His advice was on how to organise and how to finance. True, many of his own friends were apparently willing to contribute, thus giving the new review a certain direction. There would be Anais Nin, Fraenkel, Hiler, James Laughlin (of the New Directions), Lowenfels, Mayo, a Greek painter, James Stern, an Irishman and friend of Christopher Isherwood, and Van Heeckeren, "an adventurer". Still, matters of little magazine organisation and finance determined the character of Miller's advice, just as it was this aspect which later predominated in the correspondence about the Booster and Delta.

His friends and acquaintances, Miller said, "would respond, with good contributions and with money"(Corr.35). Little magazine financing involved serious calculations. "No avant-garde magazine can hope to make money. Not today" (Corr.35). Though Miller said he was "a bad businessman", his business instinct was acute enough to suppress any blue-eyed optimism. "The thing is the expense and how to get it out" (Corr.36). There was no point in discussing editorial policies - that was the implication - if the money problem was not solved. After suggesting that Durrell have Eos printed in Paris or in Belgium instead of Greece, Miller went on to explain a thought "that has been in my crop for a long time"(Corr.36). This idea - "Why not make the contributors to the review pay for the printing and mailing, etc?" (Corr.35) - was to play a certain role in not so much the financing of the Booster, but its ostentatious and comical self-presentation. On its title page was written:

For those who are determined to break into print there is an unlimited number of editorial chairs for sale at the price of a life subscription wich is 500 francs. (B.i.1)

In the letter about Eos, Miller calculated that if the contributors were to pay "about 250 francs a piece - about $12.50" then perhaps expenses could be covered. If, contrary to expectation, profits were actually made one might distribute them amongst those who had contributed. The first step, in Miller view, was to find and write to potential candidates, asking them whether they were willing to cooperate. Miller said he would put his connections at Durrell's disposal. "I have a host of friends and connections, and I have a good list of about 250 names to circulate" (Corr.36). No longer a novice in the publishing world, Miller did not expect wonders, though he did believe that "one could make ends meet"(ibid.).

Another feature of the later Villa Seurat review was introduced in this Eos letter. "There should be a bang-up announcement, stating the truth about the situation, and asking for no quarter"(Corr.36). The Booster was in fact introduced by a circular letter which told its amused readers the "truth" about the situation - "The Booster is not the last word in periodicals - and we know it!"(IntHML.iv.21). More will have to be said about the tone employed in that letter below, the indefinite and irresponsible blend of frankness and impudence which had characterised Miller's boisterous begging letters, the burlesque mingling with that streak of defiance, which G.S.Fraser described as a consequence of Miller's (occasionally) "granitic American puritanism" (FrLD.61).

In his reply to Miller's letter in December 1936, Durrell made it quite clear that Eos was finished: "Alas for Lycidas!" (Corr.42). He did say that contents had already been selected, everything ready for printing - "we were set with the manifestoes from you and other prophets"(Corr.41). Again he cursed "the latest Greek fascist law", adding that printing rates outside Greece were prohibitive: "here the quotations were a third of English or French or Italian quotes" (ibid.). Further, Durrell emphasised that he did not want to tear asunder the publishing process and thus lose the immediate sense of

producing a magazine. "And we wanted (as we had here) a printer under our thumb, a fount of our own type, and a feeling of personalness about the business"(ibid.). This was Durrell's valediction to the Eos idea.

Durrell's post-mortem on Eos did not, however, impair the newly developed sense that there existed a special relationship between Miller's Villa Seurat studio and the house of Anastasius Athenaius, Durrell's abode in Corfu. From that winter onward, thoughts and designs about mutual publishing were exchanged, became a constant substratum of their correspondence. In fact, for the next two or three years publishing projects which one of the correspondents hatched invariably came to include the other. Cooperation became customary. Leading up to their first encounter in 1937 in Paris was an exchange of letters in which the first person plural was employed with a growing and spontaneous ease and assurance. The New Instinctivism had been a piece of clownery purely Parisian; Eos had been an essentially Mediterranean and insular project. Now, there was a two-way flow of suggestions, manuscripts, information, addresses, photos, water colours, plans and ideas. "If you have any ideas, practical ones, shoot them", Miller remarked at one stage (Corr.45). One of Miller's ideas, for instance, was to bring out a collection of literary items which he personally liked, and this was to include not only Rabelais' passage on "How to Rebuild the Walls of Paris" but also a piece by Lawrence Durrell. "Searching for a cheap printer - in Estonia first. Searching for contributors who will help me put it out", and then he added: "this may even be successful from a financial standpoint"(Corr.58). Before turning to that period when some of these projects were actually realised, there is another of Miller's propositions which merits mention, for the idea he sketched out was no less than a blueprint for those Booster addenda, the Booster Broadsides.

It was in January 1937 that Miller contemplated purchasing a mimeograph machine. "I have been wondering if, instead of a magazine, with all the difficulties it entails, we could not do better by bringing out one thing at a time, after this process"(Corr.45). The idea was to print pamphlets as cheaply as possible, a whole series of them, each containing a piece of work by one single author. Miller planned to

distribute these pamphlets in the following way:

> We would send the thing to a select list of people who we might think be interested. Put no price on it but suggest that they pay what they like towards the expense, if it appeals to them. (Corr.45)

Pleading once again that he was "the most impracticable, unhandy fellow in the world", Miller added that they should try to keep everything as simple and as clear as possible. "The postage is a big item - depending, of course, on the list. The rest is labor, that's all". He then said: "And the advantage lies in placing them where one wants"(Corr.46). The unusual plans for distribution and the pragmatic worries about postage expenses apart, the idea of the booklet series became a part of the Booster publishing initiative. What Are You Going to Do About Alf? had been privately printed as a short pamphlet in 1935. But the idea of a pamphlet series in lieu of a magazine was new. Miller proposed to Durrell that if he liked the idea "we might bring out your 'Christmas Carol' first"(Corr.45). He was referring to those imaginative "seasons greetings" which Durrell had written for him and which were later entitled "Zero". It is significant that (apart from The New Instinctivism) among the dozen or so titles which the Villa Seurat later intended to publish as Booster Broadsides was that "Christmas Carol" as well as its sequel "Asylum in the Snow" for Anais Nin. Again, Miller's project never materialised, as Durrell voiced reservations about the typographic quality of mimeographic duplications. And Durrell also asked "why shouldn't the Obelisk hatch a brood of little obelisks, à la Criterion pamphlets?" (Corr.48). Jack Kahane, however, was apparently not interested, Miller lacked the funds, and other more important work required attention. The pamphlet idea, however, did not die, hibernating instead, only to surface again in the warm and moneyed Booster dog days.

Notes

1. Comprehensive Index to English-language Little Magazines 1890-1970, xi. According to Frederick Hoffman the period 1912-1947 saw the publication of at least 600 little magazines (Hoffman 2).
2. Ford 320; MFHM.34f.

II. The Booster : Taking Over a Country Club Review.

In spring 1937 Lawrence Durrell began to plan a trip to London for the autumn of that year. And, as he wrote to Miller, he intended "to stop off a day or two in Paris and meet you and have a meeting of soul-shareholders"(Corr.85). Durrell announced his visit at a time which saw what was perhaps the most intense and fruitful period of his correspondence with Miller. It was little wonder that months later, in one of his last letters preceding his departure, Durrell thanked Miller for finding for him and his wife a place to "live in" in Paris (Corr.106). The plan to stay for only a "day or two" had been revised...

In his last letter before their encounter at the Villa Seurat, Miller mentioned the Booster for the first time. His detailed sketch of the siutation is important since it is more accurate than Alfred Perlès' dramatised reminiscences. However, in spite of Miller's letter, in spite of other information provided in various interviews and letters and a handful of references in diaries and notebooks, one is usually thrown back on Perlès' account of the Booster episode. Even Miller and Durrell had little to add in later years; when questioned, the latter said: "Perlès has written all about that in his book of reminiscences, My Friend, Henry Miller" (Alyn 49), while Miller observed: "Perlès , our editor-in-chief, has written about The Booster" (Moore 96). Perlès is the main source for the Booster story's general outline, and more particularly for atmospheric depictions of those "Last of the Best Days", as Miller's biographer titled the corresponding chapter.

In 1934 the Paris bureau of the Chicago Tribune had finally closed down, leaving Alfred Perlès on the street once again. Some time later, it appears, a newpaperman acquaintance recommended him to the owner of the American Country Club of France. He was to be the editor of the official club sheet. This club magazine was the Booster(1).

Situated about twenty miles east of Paris near the village of Ozoir-la-Ferrière , the American Country Club was founded by an elderly American businessman called Elmer S. Prather. Its main attraction was a golf course which greatly appealed to the wealthier section of Paris' Anglo-American community as well as to the native high society. Perlès mentioned that golf had always been an exclusive pastime in France and that there were only a handful of courses near the Seine metropolis. The Club also provided its members with tennis facilities as well as a swimming pool - in which, incongruously, the garret poet Gascoyne took a dip in 1938 (DG.ii.48). The Club was managed by sixty-nine year old Elmer Prather "on the lines of a first class American institution" (MFHM.164). Still, it was more an object of prestige than anything else - as one can gather from the gossipy club notes in the Booster. In order to increase the Club's status and its appeal, Prather decided to launch a monthly with club notices and sporting news in 1934. This was the ur-Booster, a sheet of approximately twenty pages, at least half of which were for advertisements. The rest, as Perlès remembers, was "sadly neglected"(MFHM.165). In a dilettante manner Prather attempted to run the paper by himself, a mistake, as soon became apparent. Although a veritable master at selling advertising space to his eager purveyors, he was less talented as an editor. He had neither journalistic experience nor literary aspirations. For a time he had been content to rehash filched articles from other papers, to publish third rate stories by himself or other Club members similarly gifted. But the magazine was an amateurish affair, the Club's prestige not enhanced. Prather was realistic enough to see that a more professional hand was needed.

When precisely he contacted Alfred Perlès is not clear. It must have been before the summer of 1936, for a review of Black Spring by the Austrian appeared in the pre-Villa-Seurat Booster in August 1936 (Shifreen 78). At any rate, Prather placed the editorial burden on Perlès willing, because hungry, shoulders, and, since the president did not consider this a full-time occupation, the new editor was sent out to hunt for advertisements and new Club members. The ex-journalist had no difficulties coping with the editorial tasks; "a change of format, a more professional layout of the pages, the division of the sheet into subject groups, etc., improved the magazine considerably"

(MFHM.165). Still, at least in the eyes of Henry Miller, it remained "a lousy magazine", as he said to Durrell, "the worst imaginable shit", a stale blend of high class advertisement and low class sports journalism (Corr.110).

Much as he had grown to like his new editor, Elmer S. Prather was not content with the results of his canvassing new clients. He was also tiring of the paper. Finally, in 1937, after much hesitation, he decided to dimiss Perlès, adding, however, that he wanted to make him a parting gift. The parting gift was the Booster.

The idea was that Perlès should keep the magazine's old name and show that it had been founded by the American Country Club of France. Furthermore, he was to print in each number two pages of club news. In exchange he was to become the actual owner of the magazine, solely responsible for managing and editing it. He was assured of the Club's "moral support", suggested Prather, which was more than it sounded. The American explained: "So long as the advertisers realize that the club is still behind the magazine you won't have any trouble renewing contracts"(MFHM.166). Advertisements were still the life-blood of the magazine. Prather, it seems, emphasised that he was actually giving something to Perlès, and in a way he was. However, as Jay Martin said, it was more of "a typical American businessman's gift" (Martin 327). While not having to pay an editor, Prather would have his notices published for free and the Club would benefit from its connections with a quality magazine, for this was the gist of Prather's proposal. "You're a writer, aren't you? Why don't you turn the sheet into a first-class magazine?" (MFHM.166). And Lawrence Durrell remembers that Perlès was told "to turn it into a Paris version of the New Yorker"(Encounter.ix.51.6). The Austrian was dumbfounded. Then he realised the potential of Prather's offer:

> Suddenly the penny dropped. Prather of course didn't know what he was so innocently suggesting. He would have been horror-stricken had he an inkling that my idea was to let Henry go haywire in the pages of The Booster. (MFHM.166)

Perlès' account gives the reader the impression that everything happened quickly, explosively, spontaneously: after being fired and accepting Prather's offer, he took the train back to Paris, where he met for the first time Lawrence Durrell, and on this momentous occasion he fired the news of the Booster at the inebriated Villa Seurat circle, which promptly proceeded to draw up a definitive list of editors....

Perlès' chronology, however, was faulty. As contemporary sources show, the tale of how he acquired the Booster is not factual. "My friend Fred Perlès is just being given a sort of white elephant in the way of a lousy magazine" (Corr.109). When Miller sent this letter to Corfu in July 1937, Perlès was obviously still in the process of deciding whether to accept the magazine or not. "The President of the Club wants to make him a present of the magazine ... Fred is thinking of running it"(Corr.109). The past reality is, on the whole, less compressed and less dramatic than Perlès story suggested.

"Fred is thinking of running it". It seems likely that he deliberated for quite some time before actually embarking on the Booster adventure. There were good arguments against taking over a magazine, which did not even promise any financial reward. Miller said previously that one could not hope to make money out of an avant-garde magazine. On the contrary, frequently small magazine editors were obliged to pay out of their own pocket to make ends meet, not an alluring prospect for someone like Perlès who was "down to his last cent" (Corr.110). In addition he might have calculated how much time and energy would be have to be invested, work which might have been more profitably employed in his novels, poems and criticism. Unlike Henry Miller, he had no patroness to help him out and he was still a nobody in the world of literature. The fact that from the mid-1930s on, a growing number of other magazines seem to have been prepared to publish work by the Villa Seurat writers did not make the decision to launch a new Booster any easier. It was not always easy to gain access to noteworthy magazines and rejection slips were no rarity. But still, if one considers that by 1939 Miller and his friends had published in at least forty different reviews and little magazines, the scarcity of publishing outlets often bewailed strikes one as only relative. It is

true, writing from the USA in October 1935 Miller had said: "No poet ever gets into 'Vanity Fair' or 'Esquire'. These organs are reserved exclusively for he-men like Hemingway and Joe Shrank"(ARNY.33). But, even though such well paying rear-guard magazines were (still as yet) closed to Miller and Durrell and friends, many little magazine editors were anything but indifferent to their work. There was, in short, no absolute necessity to start a new magazine. Nevertheless, by the beginning of August, preparations for the Booster rebirth were well under way, a rebirth of "the painless, non-traumatic variety presaged by Otto Rank" as their announcing letter said (IntHML.iv.21). Perlès had decided for the new review and the last of the good days began.

Notes

1. Oddly, Jay Martin says that the magazine was called The Boosters, while both Miller and the Club's president use the singular. Furthermore, a bibliographic note shows that it was called the Booster even in 1936 (B.iii.7, Corr.110, Shifreen 78).

III. The Booster : Editorial Positions.

1. Towards an Editorial Outlook : Miller's Organisational Letters to Lawrence Durrell and Joseph Delteil.

As a source of information Perlès' memories of the Booster days are both uniquely helpful and exceedingly unreliable. His chronology is inaccurate. Often this does not really matter much. Sometimes his dramatic instinct, however, distorts rather than accentuates past events. It is by no means insignificant, for example, that the temporal relation between Durrell's arrival on the scene and important decisions about the magazine were not what he says they were. Durrell arrived after the Booster course had already been set, and this fact, as we shall see, will help explain why the face of the Villa Seurat review came to look very different when in the spring of 1938 he (and not Miller) was in control. Most later accounts of the Booster convey the impression that the magazine was conceived by Miller and Perlès and Durrell on equal terms. Sometimes the Austrian's role is even reduced to the mere procurement of the magazine. Without wanting to belittle Durrell's contribution, we must emphasise that the review's initial impetus actually came from the same coalition which had brought forth The New Instinctivism, that is Henry Miller and Alfred Perlès.

In Perlès' memoirs the list of Booster editors which he and Miller and Durrell allegedly drew up on the occasion of the young Englishman's arrival in Paris, was the first and final one (MFHM.168). It may not be important that as the Booster numbers appeared many of the original editors dropped out. What is important though, is that Miller and Perlès had already been thinking about editors even before Durrell left Greece. The scenario of spontaneity with Perlès feeling "like a sort of drunken president of the republic nominating the members of the cabinet" (MFHM.168) was a fiction.

In that letter to Lawrence Durrell of July 1937 Miller had outlined the general shape of the new Booster. Many of the central ideas behind the undertaking had already taken shape. Like most of their later correspondence about the Booster and Delta, much of this letter deals with organisational and financial problems. Questions of how to pay the printer and how to organise distribution and how to avoid censorship regulations, such topics wholly dwarf considerations of content and remained to disturb the editors until the magazine's demise in the spring of 1939.

The cost of printing a little magazine was not too high, it seems, but it was still prohibitive if no other source of income than the editor's wallet could be tapped. There were various ways of finding other sources, some more conventional than others. Commercial advertisements rather than those recommending books or other little magazines were unusual in an avant-guard review. They were also very lucrative. A full page in the Booster, for example, fetched up to 800 francs (B.ii.10). In his letter to Durrell Miller observed: "There is good advertising, enough to pay all expenses, for the moment at least"(Corr.109). He added that nearly half of the 20 pages of the old Booster were advertisements. For the beginning this was more than enough.

Another source of revenue were the returns from selling the magazine itself, a copy of which was to cost five francs. Not much was to be expected here. Subscriptions were better. Miller wrote that a yearly subscription would cost 50 francs and a life subscription five hundred (Corr.110). These price suggestions were later accepted by the other editors. They were the prices of the new Booster. As they permitted a greater freedom of operation, subscriptions were much sought after. They were also not easy to procure, for little magazines were notoriously short-lived. The offer of a life-subscription was a joke. Miller wrote to Durrell that he and Perlès were going to "make a drive for subscriptions and more ads"(Corr.110), and it is only these two ways of coming to money that Miller mentions here. Other, more eccentric schemes such as he had spun out in previous letters were not necessary at the outset. Funds were apparently still sufficiently available.

In his letter Miller said little about the new magazine's editorial organisation. Perlès would naturally be owner and editor in chief, while Miller was "going to aid him" and, as he said, to "sink some of my drivel into it"(Corr.109). Durrell was asked to be a contributing editor, like most of his Parisian friends, it would seem. Six of the future Booster editors were mentioned among Miller's suggested paying contributors to Eos, and Reichel, Brassai, Edgar and Moricand would certainly not have been missing either. The Booster editors, as Miller wrote, were to contribute for nothing. The earlier idea of making contributors pay seems to have been dropped. Very few of the non-commercial small reviews were in a position to pay their authors anyway and the Booster was no exception.

In his letter to Durrell Miller said too that the objective was to hammer the Booster "into some decent shape" (Corr.110). The magazine still looked terrible in his opinion "and it will look like that for a month or two to come". But an idea had occurred to him and Perlès and this was to become one of the characteristics which most of the later commentators on the new Booster remarked upon: "We think to put some crazy ads (like Johnny Walker, Hanan Shoes, etc.) right in the middle of a page of serious writing"(Corr.110).

There was no need for Miller to explain what he thought was "serious writing". There was no need for Durrell to be told what precisely was going to go into the new magazine. Between them there existed an understanding, a common basis, a mutual admiration (Durrell had just sent his Black Book manuscript), and an unspoken consensus, especially as concerns the benefit, even virtue, of that comical irresponsibility and existential buoyancy which already announced itself in Miller's programmatic declaration: "And we are going to boost the shit out of everybody and everything. We are going to take an optimistic turn for the sheer devil of it" (Corr.110).

Miller's letter to Durrell showed that the Booster 'fathers' were looking for contributors. Letters to this effect were in the mail by early August at the latest. Miller had begun corresponding with the "host of friends and connections" he had mentioned in his Eos letter

to Durrell, going over that "good list of about 250 names" as well (Corr.36). One of the letters Miller sent is reprinted in the Correspondence privée 1935-1978 between him and the French poet, Joseph Delteil. The letter is dated the third of August and is about the Booster. After giving a thumbnail sketch of his friend's deal with Elmer S. Prather, Miller told his correspondent about the magazine's financial situation. Not much had changed since his July letter to Greece. He explained that he and Perlès were in possession of advertisement contracts enough to pay the printer. "Pour quelques numéros nous sommes sur le velours" (CorrPriv.23f). Still, they were looking for subscribers, said Miller. It is a seemingly curious fact that the Booster editors were working to secure the financial foothold of their magazine on the one hand, while on the other they already prided themselves on their patent disregard for their advertisement clientele. "Nous n'avons rien à perdre - sauf les publicitaires, bien entendu" (CorrPriv.23f). The drive for subscriptions was conceived as a way of becoming more independent of the more squeamish of Country Club purveyors who advertised in the pages of the Booster.

Surprisingly, a posture of humility and politeness characterised Miller's epistle to Delteil. His tone was remarkably unlike the tone of his notorious begging letters ("I need dough..."). He was at his most courteous. The reason for his letter was this: "Pour demander très humblement si vous voudriez nous donner quelque chose de votre plume". Miller evidently tailored the tone of his letters to reflect varying attitudes to his correspondents, exhibiting an ambivalence which, incidentally, he had just rebuked Durrell for in the controversy about accepting or rejecting Faber's offer to publish an expurgated Black Book (Corr.109). To Joseph Delteil he wrote that the contribution might well be something "déjà publiée". This is worth noting as few magazines were willing to publish items other reviews had issued before (Corr.96). Interestingly, just as the tone of Miller's letter is most courteous and even ingratiating - "Mais en espérant, ou plutôt, j'ose vous demander une petite quelque chose..." - so the question of payment was suddenly turned upside down. Miller apologetically said: "Pour le moment on ne peut pas payer pour les contributions!". There is none of that cheerful audacity which characterised his proposals on Eos and other publications, none of the

wonderful cheek that demanded money from contributors....

Possible contributors to the Booster were apparently asked to keep their submitted items as short as possible (CorrPriv.23f). This was a matter of space, as Miller explained to Delteil. Significantly, between the letter to Durrell and that to Delteil the number of pages available for "serious writing" had more than tripled. There were now 30 to 35 pages. Again, this development suggests that money was readily available, and the Boosters were on the velvet. The date for the Booster's non-traumatic rebirth was set, as Miller told Delteil, for the first or the tenth of September.

What he did not tell Delteil was what the magazine's purpose and direction was. Delteil, and the other recipients of similar letters, were obliged to conjecture from what they knew about Miller, from the announcement that the new Booster would be something alive -"quelque chose de vivant"- , and from this: "On va 'booster' chaque issue quelqu'un ou quelque chose même les bons whiskies" (CorrPriv.23). The editorial perspective afforded was in fact next to nil, which, in a world of acutely politicised and engaged little magazines, might even have been information enough....

2. A Booster Letter.

Durrell arrived in Paris, or rather: "One day he disembarked in the Villa Seurat, crashed through the halo, and was instantly admitted to the inner circle"(1). That was how Perlès remembered the young poet's electrifying entrée. Miller recalled the event in similar terms: "I felt that I had known him all my life. We didn't have to become acquainted first. He came with his aura, which was familiar to me"(Moore 97). And Anais Nin noted in her diary: "With Durrell I had instant communication. We skipped the ordinary stages of friendship, its gradual development. I felt friendship at a bound"(AN.ii.223). He fitted in well, brought with him a Mediterranean temperament, boundless enthusiasm and a Puckish sense of humour. In short, Durrell was the ideal man to help make the Booster into "quelque chose de vivant", and this with a vengeance.

Within a few days of his arrival a circular letter was drafted(2). Miller, who quickly came to dominate the Booster venture (AN.ii.236), was apparently the driving force behind this letter. Unlike his Delteil epistle, this circular was in the tradition of his and Perlès' begging letters, eloquent of the burlesque tone which was to become particular to some of the more memorable parts of the Booster adventure. It revealed to the reader the Villa Seurat's unbridled penchant for comedy, for anarchy and caricature. Like the editorials which followed and in spite of its programmatic style, it revealed what seemed a reluctance on the part of the editors to commit themselves to any fixed attitude. The new review's contours invariably remained hidden in a haze of comedy, as nothing whatsoever was treated with seriousness or straightforwardly, least of all the editors themselves. A sense of slapstick and irony pervaded all, bespeaking what Durrell once called in The Black Book "the impotence of being earnest"(BB.13). The implied norms which usually form the background of comic endeavour remain unstable, shifting constantly. None of their statements proved immune to this infectious spirit - even those which were meant quite literally. Dodging between layers of provocation and mockery, between posturings and unexpected candour, the Booster thus

seemingly eluded definition, escaped into a satiric anarchy. In this realm so familiar to the Marx Brothers, to Olson and Johnson of Hellz-a-poppin' (1938), and other comedians, the Booster revelled in the right to blast and to boost to its heart's content - and this from positions which might change and even contradict themselves from one sentence to the next. The prime maxim in this free-for-all, this condition of unconditional opportunity, was immediate (though perhaps short-lived) effect and entertainment. And that was to be the editorials' strength - and their weakness as well.

The Booster letter was an advertisement, though "advertisement" may not be precise enough a term. Neither is "begging letter" nor "manifesto" for that matter. One might mention again Miller's prescription for Durrell's abortive Eos: "There should be a bang-up announcement, stating the truth about the situation, and asking for no quarter" (Corr.36). But whereas the Booster letter stated some of the more important ideas and policies with remarkable "bang-up" frankness, it was not easy to distinguish these from the buffoonish admixture....

Still, in spite of its comedy and contradiction, the circular was the most detailed piece of writing on the new magazine to date, giving enough information and atmosphere to enable an attentive reader to form an idea of what it would not be like. In fact, the Booster letter was the first, albeit baffling expression of the magazine's programme, with three editorials to follow.

Friends of the Villa Seurat were asked to make copies of this circular, which were then sent to possible clients, subscribers, including such influential celebrities as T.S.Eliot, Havelock Ellis, Aldous Huxley and other admirers of Miller's work. George Orwell mentions receiving a "typewritten prospectus"(NEW.xii.2.30f)

The financial question seems to have dwindled in importance, the reason, as we have said, was that there was enough money for the near future, that Durrell and his wife had an allowance of 200 pounds sterling a year, which gave all publishing projects a certain depth and security (Spirit 42). Moreover, the Boosters did not intend (according to the letter) to keep the review going for too long.

The new editors, nevertheless, made a special point of their interest in subscriptions: "But this is what we really want to say; we need your subscription - for one year or two years, or if you are rich, for life"(IntHML.iv.21f) - upon which remark, incidentally, Orwell slyly inquired whose life they had in mind: the subscriber's or the Booster's very own (NEW.xii.2.31). The letter, at any rate, continued, humorously announcing the price of the sheet, to be paid "in the coin of the realm, in gold specie, bills, bullion, checks, mandats telegraphiques - or good merchandise"(IntHML.iv.22). Their appetite for life subscriptions was underlined in the resoundingly impertinent closing paragraph: "If you must call, call with dough. We enjoy idle conversation whenever it is lucrative. If you bring a life subscription Alf will devote the whole day to you, even a week if you like" (ibid.).

The Boosters were striving for independence from commercial advertisers, being, it would seem, under no illusion that the Country Club's "moral support" was anything but a fragile affair, and that sooner or later Imperial Airways, Elizabeth Arden and Walk-Over Shoes would withdraw their lucrative commissions. Few little magazines, if any, were in fact financially dependent on commercial advertisers and it is not difficult to imagine why. At any rate, dragging the Country Club chains around must have been as distasteful to the Boosters as it was - titillating. Although in his memoirs Perlès cannot help but speak kindly of Elmer Prather, not much intelligent literary understanding was to be expected from these quarters, and so the Villa Seurat looked for other sources of support: "Perhaps by the time the capitalists had departed, the artists would have arrived"(Martin 328). Ironically, these new sources, subscriptions and ads from literary and artistic circles, were of course far more conventional in little magazine terms than the bevy of Country Club purveyors. Indeed, as we

shall see, it was not only in financial matters that the Booster's trajectory was from the wholly exceptional to a certain (little magazine) conventionality.

"We need subscriptions more than anything at the moment", Miller wrote to his friend Will Slotnikoff, urging him to order "for two years, if possible"(IntHML.iv.23). In late 1938, the Villa Seurat review was "AVAILABLE ONLY THROUGH SUBSCRIPTIONS"(D.ii.inside front cover). At the outset, however, commercial advertisement, or rather, the money paid by the "entire tribe of Paris-American snob-shops"(Orwell), was still important, and with all too much emphasis the Boosters point out how "tremendously indebted" they were to their clients, promising to boost their products, and especially such quality items as Johnny Walker's Whiskey and Hanan Shoes. Nevertheless, with the artist's (very conventional) contempt for the world of trade and commerce, the new Booster actually steered clear of the requirements any truly commercial operation would have posited - or so Perlès proudly recalls: "Mr. Prather was more baffled than perturbed. But why had I left out the full-page ad of the North-British Rubber Company? It was no use telling him we needed the page for a boost for Hans Reichel" (MFHM.170f).

Perlès noted in his Miller biography: "We were pretty high as we made out the list of our potential collaborators"(MFHM.168). The list of editors was first revealed in the Booster letter: "All the writers and artists who revolved around Miller were included in the editorial board", Perlès later recalled: "in a sense the magazine was almost a family affair"(MFHM.169). Miller was indisputably the pater familias. However, the situation on the periphery of the editorial board was far more complicated than Perlès' remarks admit, full of ambiguities, inside jokes, and privacies. A closer look at the Booster "specialists" is revealing.

Perlès himself was Managing Editor and nominally in charge. Durrell and Miller were Literary Editors. The third Literary Editor was William Saroyan. Saroyan, one of the few writers of renown Miller had found at all sympathetic during his 1935 visit to New York (Martin 308), was at the crest of his popularity at the time, a genuine literary celebrity, incomparably more famous than Miller and his shady Parisian fellowship. His name and fame - rather than an impressive effort he might have put into the Booster - hoisted him into the magazine's editorial saddle. And of course, Saroyan did not "revolve" around Miller, lived the life of a successful author in the United States, and probably did not meet the Booster group personally during the review's two-year existence (WSDG.109). He was in Paris in July 1939, but by then Miller had already left for Greece. Later he recalled not knowing anyone, any writer in Paris that summer. As a matter of fact, there is good reason to suppose that when the Booster letter was drafted he was not even aware of the honour bestowed on him. His first contribution only just appeared in the second number, and since Saroyan operated through a literary agent, the Boosters may even have had to pay for it. He was Literary Editor - and no more than a contributor of rare prominence.

The Booster letter seems to have been out before many of the "editors" in spe had expressed their consent. Walter Lowenfels, former pupil in Fraenkel's 'Death School', was nominated Editor for Butter News. This editorial position bluntly alluded to Lowenfels' renewed participation in his family's prosperous butter business (DLB.256). Understandably, he resented the Boosters' jibe, and in the third issue, Miller and friends printed the following announcement:

> Walter Lowenfels, of New York City, New York, has requested us to make public announcement 'without humor, if possible', that his good name was used in connection with the Booster editorial chair for butter news without his permisssion. We wish to state that henceforth Walter Lowenfels' name will no longer be used in any way in connection with this magazine. We do hereby make apology to Walter Lowenfels for the wanton misuse of his good name. We state this in all seriousness. Will that do, Walter? (B.iii.7)

In fact, Lowenfels had other reasons for dissociating himself from the irresponsible and 'anti-political' sheet as well: ever more involved in active labour politics, he was on the verge of leaving the family company to serve the good cause of the Philadelphia Daily Worker. The Booster was no visiting card for nascent socialists.

The Booster editors who did not live in Paris, in short, may have been nominated before they were informed or had consented. Time and postage played a certain role, decisions had to be made quickly and trans-atlantic mail was slow. Michael Fraenkel and Henry Miller were sometimes obliged to wait for weeks before a new bout in their Hamlet correspondence could begin. Fraenkel, moving in 1937/38 between Middle America and New York, became the Booster's editor in the Department of Metaphysics and Metempsychosis. This role is not mentioned in the Hamlet exchange, a fact which suggests that there existed other lines of communication between the Villa Seurat and the Death Philosopher. Fraenkel did not actually like the new magazine very much (Hamlet 302) and contributed only as late as April 1938 to the poetry Delta.

Another expatriate who returned to America in the mid 1930s was Hilaire Hiler, whom we have mentioned before. Hiler was elected Travel Editor. He never contributed to the Booster. Speaking of Miller, he later underlined that "in spite of mutual liking and respect, I have the impression that our communication was always rather poor"(Int.HML.v.6). Still, after the war they did cooperate in the publication of an art book. In 1948 the Falcon Press issued Why Abstract? with the misleading subtitle: "a discussion on modern painting between Hiler, Miller and Saroyan". The book in fact consisted of two articles by Hiler, a note by Saroyan and a letter (presumably to Emil Schnellock) by Miller dating from the early 1930s. Unlike Lowenfels, Hiler had no apparent objections to the Booster. His name disappeared from the editorial lists only in the Easter Delta of 1939. What "Travel Editor" actually signified is difficult to say. What the Booster's Turf Editor signified is also obscure. Durrell's close friend from Corfu, Patrick Evans held this post. He contributed five poems to the review.

It was not unusual for little magazines to have editors in other countries. Many American and British reviews had permanent correspondents in Paris, for instance, and Henry Miller was European editor of the Woodstock Phoenix. Still, in the case of the Booster one may safely say that editors who were not resident in Paris had little influence on the magazine's development. They were names, at best contributors, at worst, objects of mocking amusement.

Turning to the Booster's Parisian staff, we find Charles Norden, the Sports Editor. Charles Norden stood for yet another of the Villa Seurat's family jokes. Under this pseudonym Faber and Faber had published in 1936 Durrell's second novel, a pot-boiler called Panic Spring. The trade record of his first book had been "so hideously bad", Durrell later recalled, "that when I shifted publishers from Cassells to Faber, Faber made it a condition to wipe out my past and start me off with a new name" (PR.269). Charles Norden quickly came to represent one aspect of Durrell's Janus-faced personality, the more conventional side. "My double Amicus Nordensis", he remarked to Miller, was something he needed "simply for contact with the human world"(Corr.104), and it was this friend who was responsible, in Durrell's view, for work not written with that Black Book intensity and savagery. Miller was dismayed when he heard about this duality between the 'artist' and the 'literary man', concluding that sooner or later "it will be L.D. who will be obliged to kill Charles Norden" (Corr.108) - or vice versa. When Durrell heroically rejected Faber's offer to publish a mildly expurgated version of The Black Book, Charles Norden was apparently vanquished, and the artist triumphant. His resurrection in the Booster - and, incidentally, in the London Night and Day of September 9th 1937, as author of "Obituary Notice", a Wodehousian short story - was an ironic gesture, a private irony comprehensible only to the Villa Seurat intimates.

Henry Miller, too, sat on another comical editorial chair. He was the editor responsible for Fashion. Considering that he had worked in his father's merchant tailoring business just off Fifth Avenue, experiences which he wrote about in "The Tailor Shop", one might have found soemone less suited for the role of Fashion Editor. However, for Miller fashion was really an unknown quantity (Durrell writing to Miller from London: "So far no pink shirts"(Corr.117)) and according to Anais Nin's journals he felt very little at ease whenever he strayed into fashionable society. These facts did not, of course, keep him from writing with authority on Men's Winter Fashions in the second Booster. After all, had not Money and How it Gets that Way fooled a number of expert economists?

Anais Nin found the Booster cheap and distasteful from the start. Quite in keeping, she was appointed Society Editor. As shown above, her "Bohemianism" was a fairly conscious and voluntary adventure, an escape into new experience, safeguarded, however, by her husband's material resources. "Sa vie est celle d'un nomade de luxe"(FJTHM.58). She had grown up in a kaleidoscope of settings, many of which were her own creation; a truly original one , however, was her bourgeois background. However muffled in her diaries, this side shines through now and again, especially in a certain romantic desire for poverty, a sense of guilt about her material well being. After all, an artist needed to have suffered extreme deprivation... (AN.ii.201). Of course, Miller and Perlès, benificiaries of her self-conscious generosity, put their merciless fingers onto this sore when they appointed her Society Editor. The little joke was not the only reason why she disliked the magazine. She disapproved of the review's burlesque tirades: "For this reason I had to give up my association with the Booster. Too much slapstick" (AN.ii.243). But in fact, she worked for the sheet (AN.ii.279), and at one point her diary records with delight: "I am to edit a number of the Booster containing women's writing"(AN.ii.267). This number never materialised, but Anais Nin remained on the editorial board - albeit with mixed feelings. "I do not like the Booster. It is vulgar and farcical. Strident. Then I feel guilty: 'Perhaps I am too austere'"(AN.ii.264).

The other woman on the Booster's editorial list was Nancy Myers, Lawrence Durrell's wife. She was appointed Art Editor. The circular letter announced enigmatically that she would "also contribute from time to time on psychical research". A former student at the Slade, she painted, drew pictures and cartoons and designed the cover of the first Booster, a configuration of two heads, an abstract version, almost, of Edvard Munch's famous "The Cry".

Another artist completed the circular's list of "untrained editors", Hans Reichel, whom George Wickes refers to as "the Villa Seurat painter"(Corr.75). For Miller, as we have seen, Reichel was "a genius, the poet of the water colors"(Corr.96). Elected the Booster's editor for Aquarelles and Gouaches, Reichel's participation was probably passive and limited. His only contribution was the tri-lingual "Letter for the Gostersools", an epistle which makes Nijinsky's diary, a Villa Seurat favourite, seem marvelously sane. But mental instability apart, this sensitive and musical man was first and foremost an individualist, introvert to a high degree and with great difficulties in communicating with others. His visit to the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1924 led a biographer to remark: "Il n'était cependant pas fait pour le travail de groupe selon l'esprit collectif de Bauhaus" (Ragaller)(HRCat.np.). He was wholly immersed in his paintings and Miller remarked: "Reichel is living a sort of Absolute life of painting"(Hamlet 268). Little else mattered. A lonely man, alcoholic and paranoiac, he often felt unloved and rejected. Living in his own world he was isolated mentally to a degree unparalleled by the other eccentrics who frequented the Villa Seurat. Capable of outbursts of brutality and vehemence, Reichel was a delicately sensitive painter, unable to sympathise with the Booster's ribaldry: "Reichel, who was being praised by Henry, did not sleep for several nights wondering how he could tell Henry that he was ashamed to be so crudely 'boosted'" (AN.ii.243), a sentiment all the more comprehensible if one contemplates the frailty of his tiny waterclours or recalls some of the modest and simple utterrances recorded by Miller, Durrell, Brassai and other friends.

Miller, Durrell, Perlès, Anais Nin, Saroyan, Lowenfels, Fraenkel, Evans, Reichel, Hiler: these were the "specialists" announced in the Booster circular. "Just a few to start with", it went on to say: "We want as many contributing and associate and honorary editors as possible - the more the merrier". Indeed, a glance at the title-page of the first Booster shows that to the original list were eventually added the Oriental Department with Tcheou Nien-Sien, Photography with Brassai, and Publicity with David Edgar. In the following numbers several of these editors dropped away; a few names were added while the eccentric editorial departments also disappeared. What the large number of editors could not conceal, however, was what George Wickes put in the following way: "The magazine is largely a vehicle for the Miller-Durrell-Perlès triumvirate"(Corr.114). From the beginning the other editors were either absent, not actively interested or unable to impress the trio. The Villa Seurat threesome then was alone responsible for editorial policies - and for the comical self-characterisation of all Booster editors. The following self-definition is a good example of the circular letter's peculiar penchant for paradox resolved in humorous, non-committal irony:

> We are not 100% American, or a hundred percent anything. We are mostly renegade, métèque, treacherous. No sound moral fibre, no stamina, no honesty, no loyalty, no principles. We beg, beseech, cavil, whine, whimper, wheedle, whistle and cajole as much as possible. We make no bones about it. (IntHML.iv.21)

The Boosters stood outside conventional morality. This was made plain both explicitly and implicitly, explicitly because they associated themselves with the fringe of bourgeois society, the outlaws, and implicitly because, as the cheerfully irresponsible manner in which they used normative terms such as "loyalty" or "honesty" shows, such words had no meaning for them, not, at any rate, the usual cornerstone moral implications the ordinary man in the street might feel. In point of fact, as the reader withdraws from these lines, vaguely reminded perhaps of the ancient Cretan sophist Eualthus who told his baffled audience that all Cretans were liars, a sense of paradox lingers, and this paradoxical effect - "no honesty" admitted to with remarkable candour - actually reinforced the Booster's extra-conventional position. With an ironic twinkle the editors showed how questionable

was the value of words, the value of rational communication even. Conventional modes of thought and action, based on the maxim of consistency and logic were called into doubt. After all, from the point of view of the Villa Seurat, not logical rigour nor the ponderous political earnestness so typical of the 1930s were prerequisites for a good little magazine, but a dancing and aggressive nimbleness, not clarity and contour but a lively succession of burlesque masks and explosive costumes. The objective, it seemed, was not a clearer view of reality, but entertainment and effect.

After proclaiming the Booster's editorial cabinet and defining themselves as undefinable, the Boosters went on to announce in their circular some of the items to be included in the first issue, a number "which will not be particularly brilliant or spectacular- just so-so" (IntHML.iv.21f). By this time, early August, in other words, the first Booster was more or less assembled. Miller wrote to Will Slotnikoff: "As you see we took the liberty of mentioning your name as a potential contributor. For the first issue it will probably be impossible, but submit something for the next, if you'd like"(IntHML.iv.23). As this note shows, once again Miller and friends had used a name without the person's prior consent.

Confirming their announcement that "to begin with we are going to boost ourselves", most contributors were recruited from the editorial board. Some of the other editors appeared in later issues. Many of the contributors announced in the Booster letter were never published in the Villa Seurat sheet. None of Will Slotnikoff's Cosmic Moments ever appeared, nothing by Delteil, Charles Albert Cingria, Ivan Zarian, nor by "Shedd" or "Rosalind Fishbach". Who Rosalind Fishbach was, or whether this was just another Booster joke, is difficult to say. "Shedd" is not mentioned in the Villa Seurat literature, but in view of Miller's reverence for American dime-novels, his love for Rider Haggard, a certain George Clifford Shedd (who died in 1937) may have been meant, author of novels with titles such as The Lady of Mystery House, The Canyon of Conflict, The Isle of Strife or The Incorrigible Dukane.

Will Slotnikoff is ignored in most of the books about Henry Miller. He had become acquainted with Miller in 1936 in New York. Cosmic Moments was the title of his unpublished book, to which Miller contributed a slight and rambling introduction, which meditated on the meaning of the old-time burlesque show, its sexual aspects as symbolised in a show star's, Margie Pennetti's "big, beautiful, really magnificent white ass" (IntHML.ii.24). This preface was only reprinted decades later in that Millerian dustbin, the International Henry Miller News Letter. Miller and Slotnikoff corresponded, and, as late as 1966, the latter published The First Time I Live, with the subtitle: a romantic book about the writing of a book and the birth of a writer. It included an exchange of letters with Miller and his "discursive introduction" by the same. Slotnikoff was no stranger. He visited Paris in 1937 and, as we have said, was asked to type out the Booster letter by Miller. That is where his association with the review apparently ceased.

Charles Albert Cingria came from a different world altogether. His name was current in the higher literary circles of Paris, his essays published in the foremost journals and his friendship with national monuments such as Claudel, Ramuz and Cocteau longstanding (3). A friend also of Dubuffet and Modigliani, Cingria was a cosmopolitan bohemien, a wanderer, adventurous and curious about new forms of art and literature. Miller had met the author of Pendeloques Alpestres through Bravig Imbs, an American, spending a memorable afternoon and evening in the company of this remarkable man, laughing, as Miller recalled in the Big Sur book, joking, telling stories and "consuming pitchers of eggnog"(BSOHB.37). It was one of the big events in Miller's life (according to Big Sur and to Gérald Robataille's Le Père Miller) but they evidently never met again. Still, Cingria may have kept in touch, if only through his friend Jean Paulhan of Mésures, a review which, as we have mentioned before, frequently printed work by Miller, Saroyan and other American writers.

We need contributions too - poems, essays, serious articles, witticisms, pilosophy or metaphysics, travel and diary notes, fragments, unfinished novels, rejected manuscripts and, as we remarked earlier, the ripe cheesy things which have been lying in the trunk for years (IntHML.iv.22)

At a first glance the Booster "renegades" appear to enunciate a generous editorial policy. There were for them no principles to defend, nor ideals, nor dogmas - they said. In a period of increasing polarisation and intolerance in many spheres of public life, this affable approach must have seemed disturbingly odd to some, a retreat from harsh realities to others, and a welcome change to others still. The Villa Seurat, however, was not a group to halt at middling positions. Their editorial eclecticism was rigorously exaggerated and taken to extremes. The circular announced not a policy of moderation and tolerance, but one of radical and wholly unprincipled flexibility. The Booster not only relaxed but abolished with a laugh the operational maxims common to little magazines in general. It was not especially "contemporary", said the letter, thereby upsetting the rigorous avantgarde axioms upheld by most other little reviews. "The Booster is not the last word in periodicals - and we know it" (IntHML.iv.21) said the editors, adding glibly that they did not expect to "create a cyclone", nor that their issues would be "uniformly good - nothing can be uniformly good"(ibid.). A strange sense of sober assessment mixes with a kind of comically inverted self-importance, as the Boosters juggled the avant-garde principles of originality and innovation and quality, saying that they would print "old stuff as well as new", asking why they ought not to lift material from other magazines or even the Encyclopedia Britannica: "Why not? We are not afraid to dish up second-hand stuff"(ibid.). Finally, the editors announced that it was their firm intention to run the Booster "into the ground as quickly as possible"(IntHML.iv.22). And they added: "A short life but a merry one - that's our motto"(ibid.).

An underlying ironic method was at work in these lines. The idea was to avoid fulfilling expectation whenever possible and to draw as much comical energy from the resulting clash as possible. In the course of this thesis the Booster's ironic mode will be met again and again, suffice it to say at this point that once what Miller described as "the counterpoint attitude"(CosE.190f) is recognised as an operative principle, many of the Booster's irreverences lose their power to baffle. Still, if one sits back and treats the Boosters' provocations with the same nonchalance with which they treat their own subject matter, it is possible to enjoy the operations of humour and irony. It is possible to find amusement observing that 'counterpoint' method described in a Booster "Sportlight" on "Antinomian Golf"; Durrell-Norden was speaking of what he called the Taoist paradox in relation to the philosophical boxer. The philosophical boxer, he said, advances, but in doing so he actually reaches a point "where the advance becomes a retreat"(B.i.8) - and vice versa. Concomitantly, one might say, an avantgarde magazine which is, for instance, "not especially contemporary" may seem a paradox, but only superficially, since it is unusual, original in its relation to other avant-garde reviews. It was different.

As a matter of fact, in many ways the Booster was not as unusual as all that - even where it consciously tried to be so. The idea, for instance, of starting a magazine with the aim of aborting it as quickly as possible seems less absurd, less paradoxical if one considers that most little magazines went stale after six numbers or so anyway, and hence some editors actually limited from the start the number of issues to appear. The well known London Aphrodite, which Durrell and Miller must have come across before they started on the Booster, is a case in point. The only certainty about a little magazine was its early collapse, said Frederick Hoffman (Hoffman 4f), and so one sees: under the cloak of suicidal, if comical, self-drama, the Booster worked on fairly sober principles.

If one looks a little deeper such ironies abound. "We have no plans for reforming the world, no dogmas, no ideologies to defend", announced the Boosters (implying a deep disdain for those who did), before going on to say that they "will not, however, accept any political, sociological, economic or educational nonsense". This qualification in fact flatly, one might even say, dogmatically, set the Villa Seurat outside the mainstream of British and American little magazine literature - as a contemporary would have recognised immediately. Most of the literary magazines of the decade were, as Malcolm Cowley said: "full of class conscious 'proletarian' writing" (ER.284). In the chapter that follows we will return to discuss the Booster's 'non-political' editorial stance. The point here is that freedom from all manner of ideology and pre-conception was proclaimed - while a few lines on a deep rooted prejudice against political art was elevated to an editorial principle. Behind both positions, in fact, behind the idea of complete flexibility and behind the emphasis on non-politics, one discerns the Booster's desire to shock and to differ. And different it was, especially in its flaunted derision of the decade's emphasis on social and political cocerns, an irreverence which had little in common, incidentally, with, say, the T'ien Hsia Monthly's exclusion of "current political controversies"(T'ien Hsia.i.1.5). As we shall have occassion to point out, the Booster did print "political" work after all, even if one uses the word in the very narrow sense which the editors employed. But quite aside from the fact that many of Miller's speculative forays can hardly be termed "non-political", in the Booster letter assertions of flexibility and freedom of ideology were directly contradicted by preferences and prejudice - which fact, needless to say, did not worry the editors in the least.

Another case in point, the Villa Seurat trio announced "that the Booster will not print anything obscene. First because it is against the law, and we are primarily law-abiding citizens; second because it is in bad taste, and, if we have anything, we have taste" (IntHML.iv.22). Even a reader not familiar with Miller's writing may have been surprised at this announcement, for had he not just read that the editors were renegade, métèque, dishonest and immoral? If he had heard of the banned and burned Tropic of Cancer, his bafflement

will have turned into amusement, for he must have supposed that those remarks were wholly ironic: "law-abiding citizen" indeed. Tongue in cheek, the editors were understood as signalling that they would in fact consider obscene material. This, however, was a misconception. The irony which characterised these lines is self-protective, obfuscating and not revelatory. As became clear in the Booster history, they were not willing to print anything obscene, and this because they really did not want to come into conflict with the law. They were, double irony, law-abiding citizens after all. The sraightforward statement that they would not print obscenities was shrouded and obscured by the surrounding text's heavy irony. This mode of expressing outrightly what is meant but obscuring it with a dose of irony is typical of the Booster. The editors wanted to circulate their magazine not only in France, where censorship was lenient (though not at all non-existent), but also in England and America. They were not going to risk anything. More important perhaps was that Miller was tired of his role as pornographer. "When women rush up to Henry today and say :'Who's your latest cunt?' Henry blushes and moves brusquely away from them"(AN.ii.101). We have mentioned his move away from the picaresque pornographer before. The Booster's reticence was a signal that it was not concerned with "smut" but with serious if comical literature, that Miller and friends were capable of more than "obscenity". The Clichy days belonged to the past - until the Dismemberment Delta at any rate.

Another seemingly contradictory editorial principle concerned the Booster's attitude to literary criticism. Having announced that they were "rather negative on the whole", the editors nevertheless explained that they "intend to boost, baste and lambaste when and wherever possible"(IntHML.iv.21). According to their whims, they were going to "boost somebody or something" in every issue, "sometimes a person, sometimes a book, sometimes a disque, sometimes a film" (ibid.22). This programmatic point seems clear enough, until one comes across the line, "we will not print book reviews or criticism of any sort, not even the 'higher' criticism"(ibid.). What was the difference between "criticism" and "boosting"? Was the latter not a positive form of critical commentary? Not in the opinion of the Villa Seurat, who felt there existed a generic difference between the two. "Criticism"

held for them wholly negative connotations; it led invariably away from the work of art; it was pedantic, destructive, arrogant and affected, and not entertaining (Key 3). A deep loathing for "the critic", that most conventional of writers' scape-goats, filled both Miller and Durrell, and the cry "damn the critics" (Corr.49) echoes through their correspondence(4). It would be mistaking the Villa Seurat to assume that this loud disdain kept them from being interested in what the "critics" wrote about them, or from critical work of their own. At one point Durrell suggested doing short sketches of books they liked for the Booster (Corr.119). The "boost" as it appeared in the Booster was one particular form of Villa Seurat criticism, and this form was uncritical (if there is such a thing), illogical, short, intuitive, dithyrambic, full of verve and colour, but as far as their own work was concerned often remarkably perspicuous (FrLD.59). Boosting was enthusiasm and irrationality, its relation to academic criticism approximating that of a vaudeville show to a dusty domestic tragedy. Boosting was genuine entertainment - or so the editors thought.

The Booster letter was full of signs and indications of editorial policy, though these were not always as explicit as their dissociation from the Anglo-American literary scene of the pre-Depression Paris. The Boosters said: "there will be nothing by Hemingway, Paul Morand, or James Joyce". But this denial rings somewhat hollow. For they did attempt to solicit T.S.Eliot and they did print work by Kay Boyle, a representative figure of the Paris-American 1920s. Had the Boosters been in a position to obtain contributions by one of these Olympians, who were admittedly not wholly beyond the scope of their acquaintance, they would have been happy to print them.

The Boosters indicated their review's new direction in more positive terms as well. Flying once again in the face of purposive and committed journals of the day, the objective was said to be entertainment. "We are also looking for entertaining contributors", an epithet which plainly excluded not only most revolutionary art (again), most poems about the Spanish Civil War, about fascism and democracy, but much of the remaining non-political literature as well, most of the Work in Progress instalments by James Joyce, for example. What precisely the

Boosters found "entertaining" they did not explain in so many words. The letter's tone spoke for itself, but it was not much that one deduced from comments such as: "a fantasy portrait entitled 'Benno, the Wild Man of Borneo', by Henry Miller" or "a sports article - one of our 'regular' features - on 'Antinomian Golf' by Charles Norden, author of the celebrated Panic Spring". The buoyant tone was revealing, yes, and it was clear that the Booster was struggling to diverge from an implied (rather conventional view of) conventionality, trying not to fit any stereotype. But, as George Orwell's reaction to the first Booster shows, the recipient of a Booster circular was not necessarily any clearer about what to expect.

At times the will to differ, to take "the counterpoint attitude" (CosE.190f), led to crudities: "We will even take things in German, especially if degenerate in quality"(IntHML.iv.22). Degenerate art - Entartete Kunst - was, of course, the Nazi propaganda term for all modern forms of art opposed to a realism of a most gaudy and sentimental kind. A first glance at what was also a reference to that infamous exhibition which had opened in Munich less than a month before, seems to indicate sympathy on the part of the Boosters with the persecuted artists. After all, among the artists and writers who were persecuted by the Nazis, whose works were confiscated and even destroyed, there were many deeply admired by the Villa Seurat. We need mention only Paul Klee, who had been Hans Reichel's friend and mentor. However, viewed in context with the Booster's other editorials, to say nothing of Miller's comments on world affairs and his dogma of indifference, there can be little doubt that the joking remark drawing on this tragic subject matter was motivated not so much by compassion and apprehension, as by the impulse to mock such compassion - and this for effect's sake. Compassion with the persecuted was a moral axiom for the Booster's French and English readers - and thus crying out to be violated. Miller and friends, generally indifferent to what was not personal and immmediate, were not people to miss an opportunity such as that. The fact that the works by those painters, sculptors, novelists and poets, philosophers and other thinkers they admired most and recognized as immediate forbears (Picasso, Van Gogh, Braque and Gauguin, even Lawrence, to name a few) were often the first to be engulfed by the flames did not concern them, or so they thought. In

the following chapter, the Booster's programme of detachment and acceptance will be discussed in some detail.

Notes

1. MFHM.133. Anais Nin dates Durrell's arrival in August. George Wickes says it was in September. The former seems the liklier date (AN.ii.223).
2. three dates: August 5th, 8th and 19th (Martin 532; IntHML.iv.21f).
3. cf. Cingria, Charles Albert. Correspondence Générale.
4. Corr.49. "Criticism is for the critics, not for the writer"(Miller) (NMHM.30). For the unpleasant political implications of this anti-critical view see our discussion of "The Enormous Womb" by Miller in the fourth Booster.

3. The Booster Editorials.

Four numbers of the Booster were issued from September 1937 to January 1938. They were followed by three issues of Delta which appeared more sporadically, one in April 1938, the next at Christmas, and the final number around Easter 1939. Apart from the Booster letter, the Villa Seurat trio produced three editorials. The first introduced the September number, the second appeared in October, and the third in November. The other issues of the Villa Seurat review which followed did occasionally contain short announcements by the editors (notably the first Delta). Nevertheless, there was nothing to compare in length and importance either with the Booster letter or with the three editorials. Not unimpressed by the Boosters' peculiar editorial gusto, the subscribing reader may however have been puzzled to find the noisy Miller-Durrell group laying aside the manifesto megaphone from early 1938 onwards.

It is not easy to say why they chose this course of action. What one can say, however, is that the editorials of September, October and November were written by Miller, Perlès and Durrell - respectively. Although they will have consulted one another and although they signed collectively, each editorial carried a particular stylistic and tonal imprint, the autograph of one of the Villa Seurat threesome.

Alfred Perlès, editor in chief, composed the October editorial, which was in French and subtitled: "CE QUE 'BOOSTER' VEUT DIRE EN FRANÇAIS". Perlès was the only one of the three with a genuine command of the language. Also, the editorial's mood and tone - the "boosting" spirit translated somewhat inadequately into French - are virtually indistinguishable from his "Autour de la Missive de Betty", which was issued in the same number.

Lawrence Durrell's hand is discernible in the third editorial, which insisted on using the terms "poetry" and "the poet" and ended with a cryptic little quatrain, of a kind Miller would never have written. In the curious idiom of heraldry, this four-liner, reprinted in 1960 as part of his "Ballad of Kretschmer's Types", was said to "surmount" the Booster's "armorial banner". It calls to mind that Durrell's private art theory was based (at least in its terminology) on certain correspondences between poetry and heraldry. A quasi-Platonic realm of absolute art, for example, was something he called "the Heraldic Universe". It is unlikely that Miller (or Perlès) would have used the English "lift" instead of "elevator" in the line: "Panic is coming down like a dropping lift"(1).

Similarly, the September editorials' rough tone and diction strongly suggest the voice of Henry Miller, the "last American enfant terrible left in Paris", as the Criterion had called him some months before, "keeping alive the strong-arm-and-knuckle-duster tradition" (Criterion.xvi.64.502). If, indeed, the Booster trio had decided on a divison of labour, it seems more than likely that Miller would have contributed the important pioneer editorial.

The other editorials are of interest as well, especially where they add to the first editorial's anouncements, or where they seem to contradict it. Still, it was undoubtedly the Miller editorial (along with the Booster circular) which pointed the direction, and those which followed largely varied and played on themes and propositions previously introduced.

An editorial, especially a pilot editorial, is a platform supported by - the magazine which follows. From this platform an editor can define explicitly and implicitly the nature of his publication, its values and aims as well as the group of his future collaborators and his proposed readership(2). In the Booster's case the reader familiar with the strongly autobiographical character of Villa Seurat writing will hardly be surprised to find in the editorial's foreground not so much a depiction of the magazine's aims and purposes as - the editors themselves. Acting out the ritual functions required when a little magazine is launched, this editorial too identified some of the

EDITORIAL

UNLIKE most magazines the Booster has no fixed policy. It will be eclectic, flexible, alive — serious but gay withal. We will use tact and delicacy when necessary, but only when necessary. In the main the Booster will be a contraceptive against the self-destructive spirit of the age. We are not interested in political line-ups, nor social panaceas, nor economic nostrums. We believe the world will always be a trying place to live in, but a good place just the same. We are *for* things rather than *against*. But we are fluid, quixotic, unprincipled. We have no aesthetic canons to preserve or defend. We prefer quality when we can get it, and if we can't have quality then we want what is downright wretched. Because what is bad is often better than what is just good. But we are not too insistent : we will give ground, we will compromise when it is dictated by necessity. In short we are anything but fanatical. There are so many people who profess to be in the right that we see no harm in being wrong now and then. We are not ashamed to contradict ourselves or to make a mistake.

We have kept the name « Booster » because it appeals to us. We intend to boost rather than to knock, primarily because it is a sounder principle. Also because we are incurably romantic and enthusiastic. Every age, for those who are living it, seems like a bad one ; to us, on the contrary, it seems like the Golden Age. It's the only one we shall know and we intend to make the most of it. The world is what we are and not what we would like it to be. We are, accordingly, even more optimistic than the optimists. We are with God all the time, boosting his handiwork, assisting him, giving him a hand. Why not ? We leave the dirty work of making the world over to the quacks who specialize in such matters. For us things are all right just as they are. In fact, everything is excellent — including the high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not. We wish everybody well and no gravel in the kidneys. Signing off...

THE EDITORS.

The first Booster editorial, September 1937

review's distinguishing traits, continuing firmly in the tone struck in the Booster letter - before it went on to present what might be called the Boosters' collective personality.

This Booster type was less a distillation of the editors' heterogeneous and real individual traits than a projection of the Villa Seurat credo, the constituent elements of which in so far as they are touched upon in the editorials will be the topic of this chapter.

Having said that the Villa Seurat credo was given expression in the lead editorial, one hastens to qualify. First of all, the Boosters themselves would have denied that there existed anything like a Villa Seurat creed. The September editorial presented the ideas of Henry Miller, ideas and attitudes which were not shared by all the Booster contributors nor even fully by his closest friends. The other editorials' slight deviations are eloquent of this. Moreover, it is not even possible to relate Miller's editorial views to his own philosophy with any degree of certainty, for his Weltanschauung was no homogeneous body of thought, but a changing, "fantastically digested pot-pourri" (AO.46) with a strong emphasis on playfulness, digression and logical discontinuity. It was in fact (as Michael Fraenkel discovered in the voluminous Hamlet exchange) so difficult to pin down that occasionally it baffled its syncretistic compiler himself. Still, there did exist in the welter of Miller's philosophico-cosmological observations certain views which remained fairly consistent throughout, and to a point they were shared by Durrell and Perlès. If, in what follows, we do refer to something called the Villa Seurat outlook in spite of all these reservations, it is such viewpoints we will have in mind. The Booster editorials, however, frequently no more than hinted at them.

The first editorial was no taut programme which presented a system of ideas in a comprehensive and logical manner. It only mentioned some views briefly, touched lightly upon others and tucked many away in the folds of its evasive irony, its comedy and its ambiguities. Very little was actually explained, as the Boosters reiterated their chant: "we are fluid, quixotic, unprincipled"(B.i.5). Meaning was not narrowed down but widened, opened and stretched. And yet Miller's

editorial stood well enough on its own, excellently, in fact, if one compares it with many of the clogged essays in which he did try to explain what he means. For after having glanced through the editorial, the reader might well have had a good idea of what to expect of the Booster, or rather of what not to expect. Indeed, these self-descriptions of the Booster were poignant enough to be almost memorable. The following example seems to illustrate this. In summing up his impressions of Henry Miller in "Inside the Whale", George Orwell actually referred to and quoted from a Booster/Delta advertisement: the magazine, he said "used to describe itself in its advertisements as 'non-political, non-educational, non-progressive, non-co-operative, non-ethical, non-literary, non-consistent, non-contemporary'". Orwell felt that Miller's work could be described in a similar way(CE.i.549). Still, as in the case of this advertisement, which describes the magazine's general direction pointedly enough, the Booster editorial may be said to unfold its full meaning only if regarded in a larger context. This context is the Villa Seurat's work in general, or, far closer at hand, the Booster contributions of Miller and friends in particular. The first editorial was, in other words, an anticipation cast in the form of banter, provocation, ambiguity and promise, an overture rather than a conclusive manifesto. In a manner which is almost analogous, this chapter will attempt to provide an introduction to those Villa Seurat concepts which were referred to in the editorials and which seem comparatively stable. It will point the reader to relevant items in the magazine itself, contributions which will be discussed individually and in greater detail in later chapters.

In our remarks on the circular letter, some aspects of the Booster's editorial position have already been touched upon. A special emphasis was given to its tonal qualities, that blend of burlesque and provocation, of buffoonery and seriousness, irony and straightforward announcement, which tended to disrupt expectation and to destabilise a possible normative background, thus foiling the reader's natural attempt at placing and defining the editors. In a way the resulting and intentional anarchy of meaning was entertaining, and held the promise that the Booster would be a colourful and unusual bird indeed. The editorials, especially the first, continued in the same vein.

With all this playful confusion, however, a reader could possibly perhaps have come to the conclusion that the Booster was simply a joke, and no more. This was not the case.

There was a line in the first editorial, to the effect that the review would be "serious but gay withal" (B.i.5). The Booster, as Nicholas Moore noted in 1943, was "not concerned solely with making fun" (NMHM.22); its clownery was an integral part of its editors antinomian outlook. What one needed in order to create genuine art, said the third editorial, was "faith, and the ability to laugh"(B.iii.5). Although the Boosters' editorials resounded with their laughter, it is their "faith", their "serious" face, which we will be concerned with here.

In the earlier discussion of the Booster letter, one of the magazine's most characteristic features was hardly touched upon, something discernible in the editorials and, for that matter, in much of the magazine's content as well. It was this: the Boosters were essentially happy.

The significance of this simple observation should not be underestimated. If there was something which set them apart from most other little reviews of the day and from many artists and poets as well, it was to be found here and nowhere else. It may be more precise to say that the Boosters' collective personality as proffered in the editorials radiated a sense of zest, cheerfulness and contentment; more precise because biographical reality does at times clash violently with the literary personae these fervent self-mythologisers built for themselves. Still, artistic pose or not, overtones of gaiety were effectually communicated to an irritated audience, a readership evidently accustomed to entirely different fare. An early reader, George Orwell, noted in 1939: "The thing has become so unusual as to seem almost anomalous, but it is the book of a man who is happy"(CE.i.546). Orwell was referring to Tropic of Cancer , but the same might be said of the Booster and its editors. Many writers and little magazine producers were stimulated by some acute discontent, heaviness of heart or anxiety about the future. The Boosters were different, or so they said. Referring to Lawrence's "happy and intelligent paganism" Cyril

Connolly once noted in his journal that the closer one approached it, "the less one has to write about", and he added: "Writing is an accident arising out of a certain unhappiness" (CCJM.239). Indeed, the frenetic style in which the Booster euphoria is expressed might seem to be a reaction against and a cover for a sense of dislocation which the editors found uncomofortable. But the Boosters themselves would have contested this view vociferously. "We are not creating a proletarian literature out of misery and denial", Miller had written some years before about his Austrian comrade and himself: "we are creating a literature about ourselves, about our happy life of shame" (Alf Letter 10). Their happy life in Paris, a topic eloquently presented in Alfred Perlès' "Josette" in the penultimate Delta, did not reduce their imaginative energy at all. On the contrary, as they stressed, it was the very well-spring of their creative energies.

Having said that, the question arises : why did they "create" a literature at all? Why write or bother to produce a little magazine if one was content and happy, and often tended to disparage 'art' as no more than a poor surrogate for Life (with a capital L)? After all, the second Booster editorial clearly said: "L'art, pour nous, est un pis-aller. Nous sommes cent pour cent pour la Vie"(B.ii.6).

It is true, the Boosters' attitude was not as clear cut as the well modulated and demonstrative tone of many of their statements might suggest. Sometimes they said this, sometimes that, and what they actually did was a different matter altogether. "Miller himself could never decide whether art or life held ascendancy over his star" said Ihab Hassan (IH.38). One must add, however, that in the years before the war a synthesis of the two numina Life and Art was frequently posited in the form of the artist who had (in true Art and Artist tradition) given up art in the usual sense, and made his life a work of art. This "Exemplar" as Miller called him, was the vanishing point alluded to in the Booster editorials, and we will return to him presently (Hamlet 226).

Why write or produce a little magazine? The answer which the Villa Seurat offered was: because the average artist, one who still struggled with the more usual artistic materials like ink and paper and paint, at any rate, was "incomplete" and needed an audience. The remark is clarified by Anais Nin who said about a conversation with Miller and Durrell: "We reached the certitude that the artist is not whole. Only his work is whole"(AN.ii.248). In his art he might be complete, but in "life" he still needed an audience, a fact which qualified his individuality and self-sufficiency. Individuality and self-sufficiency, however, were prerequisites to "wholeness", to true happiness. "For even when, like yourself, one consciously directs his own destiny", Miller wrote to the vitalist philosopher Keyserling, "even when one is aware of his own creative powers, still one must finally confirm this creation by reading it in the eyes of others" (IntHML.v.16). Miller, allegedly "the Happy Rock"(AN.ii.295), "Individualist in Extremis" as Charles Glicksberg called him (TCL.vii.4.187), here acknowledged, not only a readership's existence in the operation of art, but its indispensability also. The artist was not "whole".

The Booster was to all intents and purposes no different from a work of art, a "creation" in Miller's phrase(3), and so it partook of precisely the same paradoxical condition between vociferous self-sufficiency on the one side and the fact that it was a publication addressing itself to a wider public on the other. The editors delighted in producing their sheet with a proud and loud disregard for all external exigencies, relished in running it and running it into the ground as they pleased - and, annoyingly, depended on that anonymous body of readers outside. Editors were not "whole" either.

If we say that despite their je m'en fouism, the Boosters reckoned with, needed the awareness that an outside reader would react in some way to, "confirm" what they wrote, the question arises: react to or "confirm" what? What did the editors want to communicate? Indeed: did they want to impart anything at all? Did they not stress from the outset their contempt for ideologies and proselytising, "the dirty work of making the world over" (B.i.5) as they put it? Had they not voiced their contempt of "the quacks who specialize in such matters" (B.i.5)? The Boosters said: "we are fluid, quixotic, unprincipled"(B.i.5).

There were "no plans for reforming the world, no dogmas, no ideologies to defend"(IntHML.iv.22), let alone "aesthetic canons" (B.i.5). Perlès claimed: "Notre programme, c'est de ne pas en avoir" (B.ii.5), and his editorial staff insisted with penetrating regularity that they were wihout principles, "not dogmatic but phrenetic", as the third editorial said, "diseased, polymorph, glabrous, picayune, insomniac, vertiginous and cartiligenous" (B.iii.5). Caught in this logomaniacal rush and conscious of contradictory claims and counterfeit ironies, the reader might well be tempted to throw up his hands and actually believe the sheet's allegations, its ostensible innocence (or confusion) of purpose. Nothing could be more inappropriate.

The philosopher and critic Ludwig Marcuse once commented on Henry Miller's extreme anarchism, saying: "Like the most radical of romantics he has no programme - with the exception of the stone slab on which the non-existence of a programme is proclaimed"(4). The same might be said of the Boosters, and yet there was more to it than that. Like the most radical of romantics, Miller and friends, who incidentally said of themselves in the first editorial: "we are incurably romantic and enthusiastic"(B.i.5), were not simply proposing the absence of programme and ideology, were not merely suggesting (as we will see) that in contrast to most dynamic-partisan sheets of the day they were "eclectic, flexible, alive"(B.i.5). What they were in fact advocating first and foremost was a radical change of heart, no less than a completely different attitude to life, and this was, as they saw it, a total revolution.

"The work of art is nothing", Henry Miller noted in Nicholas Moore's Seven in 1938: "It is only the tangible, visible evidence of a way of life"(Seven.iii.22). By analogy, for the Villa Seurat, the Booster was nothing, except the tangible, visible evidence of a way of life. Pervading all editorial arabesques there was that buoyancy of spirit, a happiness, evidence of their new and different "way of life". But there was also the desire to evince this vision of the happy life, to confirm it , as Miller said, by "reading it in the eyes of others". It was, in short, not so much the Booster itself, qua magazine, which promised to be a "contraceptive against the self-destructive spirit of the age"(B.i.5), as the lead editorial said, but the Villa Seurat's

fundamentally different outlook on life. To the constituent elements of this utopian vision, to the way the Boosters saw themselves, to the terminology of their antinomian revolt, which boldly used terms such as "genius", "selfhood", "cosmos" and "God" (WoH.22), to their peculiar brand of idealistic realism, their insistence on "acceptance" and the "world-as-is", we must now turn our attention.

According to the editorials' tone and their explicit assertions the Boosters were happy, living the good life, basking in the sunshine. They were conscious and proud of this. "Every age, for those who are living in it, seems like a bad one", said the lead editorial: "to us, on the contrary, it seems like the Golden Age"(B.i.5). The Boosters lived high in their Golden Age, while the rest of mankind apprehended with horror the impending cataclysm: economic depression and social unrest everywere, civil war in Spain, atrocities in China, torture and persecution in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia ... Miller's oddly self-content reactions to the world around him bewildered George Orwell to the degree that they became the subject matter of a whole series of articles over many years(5). We too are led to the question: what, in the editorial pronounciamenti, was the reason for the Boosters' curious serenity, the clue to their "happiness"? Plainly, an awareness of the world's political deterioration was not wholly absent from their deliberations. The third editorial gave examples for the aforementioned "self-destructive spirit of the age" when it spoke of battleships "massing on the Yangtse Kiang", while in "the newsfilms the glorious dead are being shovelled into graves" (B.iii.5). Whence, in the face of terrifying developments, their immunity from worry and fear? Whence, on the contrary - for their attitude had little in common with a stoical calm, which the ancient Greeks called <u>ataraxia</u> - that heaven-on-earth self-assurance and gaiety in the depressing European autumn of 1937?

The answer to this question, suggested in a short-hand manner in the Booster's pilot editorial, reveals an unusual mixture of practical thinking and lack of sentimentality on the one hand, and radical unrealism on the other. Setting forth at an almost leisurely pace from sound and no-nonsense premises, the editorial postulations suddenly leap to extremities that seem little more than preposterous. This mode of argument was in fact fairly characteristic of much of Miller's and some of Durrell's early discursive work. In the following pages, we will try to reiterate some of the editorial statements and to point at the meaning behind them, well aware of the fact that the Villa Seurat's propensity for eclecticism, inconsistency and irrationality necessitates a highly selective approach, which, in other words, has no special claim to comprehensiveness.

Miller's lead editorial, ostensibly not blind to the little blemishes of the times, began by expressing a basic acquiescence, a "yes" to life. "We believe", said the editors with hinted assurances of impartiality and moderation, "the world will always be a trying place to live in, but a good place just the same"(B.i.5). This outlook can hardly be described as eccentric, in fact it calls to mind the attitude of one social type whom Orwell called the "ordinary, non-political, non-moral, passive man" (CE.i.549). After all, the editorial continued, this world and age was "the only one we shall know and we intend to make the most of it"(B.i.5). Again, this seems no more than an innocent carpe diem motif, paving the way for a call for a seemingly sober and sensible view of life: "The world is what we are and not what we would like it to be"(B.i.5). The editorial seems to appeal to the common man's norm of pragmatism and no nonsense.

What, however, appears to be another well-tempered disclaimer of castles in the air and day-dreaming enthusiasts reveals itself on closer inspection as the gateway to the Booster's antinomian Utopia. For what the editorial demanded was not a balanced scepticism, but the categorical rejection of all modes of thought and feeling, all systems moral, ethical and theological, which set beside or above the world "as is" another world, an idea or imagined vision of what life ought to be. The Boosters postulated an absolute, one might even say, phenomenological realism, where anything that distracted or falsified or

qualified one's perception of reality, inner reality included, was thrown out, not to mention practical endeavours resulting from such "idealisms". The Boosters, in short, presented themselves as thorough (almost Shestovian) anti-idealists.

What they saw as an eternal disparity between the ideal ("what we would like it to be") and the real (the world as is) was the source of all desperation and misery: the disparity, it must be emphasised, and not conditions prevailing in the real world as such. Miller frequently mentioned the necessity of ridding oneself "of the tyranny of the ideal" (Hamlet 266). Similarly, "the terrible disintegration of action under the hideous pressure of the ideal"(BB.222) was one of Durrell's themes in The Black Book. In an article suggestively entitled "Active Negation as a Revolutionary Solvent" Michael Fraenkel too spoke of abolishing "the tyranny of goals"(T'ien Hsia.viii.4.350).

The solution to suffering and anxiety according to the Villa Seurat was as simple as it was difficult to realise in practical terms: abandon the ideal, or rather, make present reality the ideal. Automatically terms such as hope and optimism, pessimism and despair would lose all significance: "We are, accordingly, even more optimistic than the optimists"(B.i.5). The meaning was clear: the Boosters (according to the editorial self-description) were beyond hope, beyond expectation. There was no "ideal" to cloud their vision (or so they claimed) and what they saw was the real, the essential. Consequently, there were no doubts, and there was no alienation: they were in harmony, at one with the world around them, living, in short, wholly in the present, in the "Golden Age". There was no other!

The Boosters had achieved their objective (or so they said): a pure and unblemished perception of reality, and of themselves as well: the "world is what we are"(6). Clarity about the external world and self-knowledge, however, were in themselves, of course, no less than new and most exacting ideals, anti-idealistic ideals, but ideals all the same. Unintentionally, they again followed their hero D.H.Lawrence who had cried in the preface to Shestov's All Things Are Possible: "Away with all ideals"(LSAT.10f) - and had then gone on to establish (even in the opinion of Lawrence Durrell) "an idealism more damning, more

hysterical, more ruinous than any that has yet been known"(BB.217).

If one wants to understand why the Boosters often mingled terms of extreme realism and of extreme idealism, this may be the answer. If one desires to comprehend why their art is full of penetratingly realistic observation of the external world, on the one hand, and with a haze of metaphysical jargon, on the other, why what Anais Nin called "the smell of human beings" mixed so easily and so quickly with "the heavens"(B.iii.27), how, for instance, Henry Miller could produce a sober portrait of the painter G.B.Benno, in "Chez Benno" for the London Bulletin, and conjure an unintelligible, expressionistic "Benno, the wild man from Borneo" for the Booster as well, here is the intersection on which one's attention ought to be focussed. The real was the ideal - and, in Villa Seurat terminology, this ideal was variously called: "womb", "self", "the Heraldic Universe", "China", or "God". Some months before the Booster was launched, Miller had written in praise of Durrell's The Black Book, commenting on its authenticity and encompassing "realism" in terms which anticipated his "A Boost for the Black Book" in the second Booster:

> instead of the retrogressive neurotic swing back to the womb - womb being the unattainable, the Paradise of the Ideal, the Godhood business - you have expanded the womb-feeling until it includes the whole universe. All is womb, hence you are constantly with God. (Corr.79)

It not difficult to make fun of seemingly obscure pronouncements such as these, and in a post-war review George Orwell poignantly advised that Miller should give up "'being God', because the only good book that God ever wrote was the Old Testament"(CE.iv.136). Henry Treece, a leading neo-romantic himself, called Miller, a "strange sort of deity that lives like a slug under a damp stone!"(HISA.167). Still, if one wishes to understand the Villa Seurat, it is no use basing one's considerations rigidly on terms which must make much of what they wrote seem sheer nonsense but which also make it difficult to explain not only that part of their oeuvre which was highly successful, but also their astounding creativity at a time when many artists were either "shouldering guns ", or "devoting themselves to the Revolution" or were "numbed and dazed into inaction" (Martin 316). What seems more important is the attempt to see what the Boosters meant, to see what

meaning they gave to a terms such as "God" or the "Womb" - and why. In a book on Lawrence Durrell, G.S. Fraser noted:

> We live in a period in which there is no orthodoxy, in T.S.Eliot's sense of the word; and in which, therefore, poets have to write their own sacred books, concoct their own rituals and mythologies, built schemata into which their poems may fit or seem to fit. (FrLD.105)

We are here concerned with outlining the Boosters' rituals and 'mythological' patterns as well as their eclectic conceptual background.

One point of departure is their emphasis on "the world-as-is" (B.iv.23). The Villa Seurat view of man was crucially influenced by the experience of deprivation and hunger shared by Miller and Perlès in the early 1930s in Paris. To survive to the next meal was the only maxim(Hamlet 274), and any thoughts about tomorrow a blatant luxury:

> We have to eat every day, and smoke, and what not. Five Year Plans don't interest us. Tomorrow doesn't interest us. It's today that counts - and only today! (Alf Letter 9f)

Although we disagree with Kenneth Rexroth who said, "life has never lost that simplicity and immediacy" for Henry Miller (KRBiB. 163), it is true that this insistence on the immediate was the foundation. Nevertheless, as the autobiographical sketches of Miller and Perlès reveal, their poor life in Paris was always a literary experience as well.

Literature accompanied their destitution: to describe the bohemians of Greenwich Village, whom Miller associated with in the post-war years, Malcolm Cowley later outlined a "system of ideas"; one of these ideas was that anti-puritan, anti-bourgeois notion "of living for the moment" (ER.60). Just as Miller's "exile" was not only a personal act of liberation, but also the self-conscious emulation of influential literary examples, so another related tradition fed into his anti-traditional emphasis on the present: the examples of the modernist poets and their work.

Some critics felt that Miller understood nothing at all of European modernism (AL.274), and it is true that the Boosters with the possible exception of Lawrence Durrell and Anais Nin, did not stress aesthetic innovation and formal experiment in the way the earlier modernists had done. Still, the Boosters did belong to the Modern Movement, if only by elective affinity: they thought of themselves as the avant-garde, highly critical, they insisted, of past values, testing these with the hammers of protest, obscenity and blasphemy. In the footsteps of the great father figures like Lawrence and Eliot, Joyce and Pound, they stressed the individual imagination with an unusual lack of compromise, unusual especially in the century's fourth decade. At least, that is how they saw it. Their repeated calls for "a classic purity" (BS.46), meaning liberation from conventional norms, aesthetic, moral and psychological preconceptions, were in the modernist tradition. Miller's essay on Brassai, reprinted in the first Booster, loudly insisted on "une vision normale" (B.i.21). It is true that this insistence was hardly more than a weak echo of modernistic experimentation, of the rigorous anti-traditionalism of Dada and Gertrude Stein and others; still, it was unusual (again) in a literary enviroment which had largely accepted the drift toward a journalistic art with a strong stress on the topical, the socio-political, the analytical and rational, the didactic. Latecomers perhaps, the Boosters refused to admit that the modernist party was over, that the curious optimism and adventurous spirit of the early years had faded, that its hopes for innovation had grown brittle, the turmoil of ideas and experiment subsided. And so, they affirmed modernist premises, celebrated the artist and the individual imagination, insisted on the "eternal" romantic themes, made the large claims that art was "going to be real art, as before the flood", for instance, that it was "GOING TO BE PROPHECY"(Corr.19), rejected history and tradition, and all this (ironically) as if they themselves had discovered it. Kenneth Rexroth put his finger on it when he said that Miller often "writes as if he had just invented the alphabet"(KRBiB.158).

Oddly, armed with the fervour of the innocent, the Boosters did in fact succeed in playing a notable role in twentieth century romanticism. Willaim A. Gordon even placed Miller at the head of that great wave (DLB.292). More specifically, the Boosters influenced what Henry Treece called "a Romantic Revival" (HISA.175), a broad trend headed by Dylan Thomas and George Barker, which began in the mid-1930s, the battle, as the poet Francis Scarfe put it, "for the liberation of emotion, and against purely intellectual and cerebral standards, which Lawrence had so valiantly preached"(FSAA.xiii). This topic will be treated especially in two later chapters: "The First Poetry Delta, April 1938" and "Lawrence Durrell in London: Editing the Second Poetry Delta". For all the iconoclastic hubhub they created, the Boosters were ironically preservers, salvaging for later times remnants of modernist attitudes.

An example: inspired by Freud's discovery of the dream-world's timelessness, strongly influenced by Wyndham Lewis' Time and Western Man, as well as the teachings of Taoism, Lawrence Durrell was concerned with creating a "spatial idiom" for his art, with "DESTROYING TIME" (Corr.19) as he wrote to Miller. "The Sonnet of Hamlet" which was printed in the final Delta was a serious attempt to realise this idea, an idea which was referred to also, incidentally, though with less earnestness, in his "Sportlight" column in the first Booster. There he took the words of socialite tennis player Helen Wills from Nevada: "and my, how time flies!" as a joking point of departure to illustrate the "proper psychic attitude ... in which time not only flies, but ceases to exist"(B.i.8). As the title of his Hamlet sequence shows - it was a "Sonnet" - his quarrel with "time" and tradition never went as far as, say, Gertrude Stein (whom he hardly ever mentioned) and her attempts to create a linguistic cubist time-space continuum in Tender Buttons. Nevertheless, his preoccupation with the aesthetic implications of "time" did carry over into the decades after the war, into his Alexandria Quartet and beyond ...

Durrell said: "It is necessary to empty the old wine in meditation and reverence before stiffening the skins with new" (Spirit 247). Closer to Miller's and Durrell's way of thinking than Stein was the modernistic revolt as exemplified in the work of Joyce and Eliot and Lawrence, where tradition was not wholly negated but appropriated as a reservoir of fragments. Like Michael Fraenkel, the Boosters shouted "tradition is harmful from every standpoint" (T'ien Hsia.viii.4.349), like Nietzsche they believed that in order to build the new one must first destroy the old, but then went on to draw on it in meditation and reverence. In The Black Book, Durrell speaks of "articulating the skeletons of old systems in order to examine them, and destroying them again"(BB.159). They saw that as soon as the old was put through the mill of the individual artistic consciousness, as soon as it was digested, changed and rebuilt, it proved most useful in the shaping of the new personal order, the new cultural context for the artist, exiled from a meaningful continuity. Durrell said: "We have put our myths in the cellar and must start building again with new implements, a new tongue"(7). Although for the Boosters the masters of modernism themselves already belonged to the category of cultural reservoir, to be requisitioned, and, as in the case of Breton for instance, reinterpreted according to "the new myth"(BB.238), the attitude behind this mode of viewing the past came directly from them. Miller, for instance, quoted the surrealist chief in his "Open Letter" to confirm his "here and now" doctrine: "We should carry ourselves as though we were really in the world!"(CosE.176).

Like most literary have-nots, the Boosters tended to play down their debt to (or even denigrate) their towering immediate forebears. If and when they did search out building material for their new, anti-traditional "one-man culture" it was preferably in distant and exotic settings. But even here they remained rooted in the modernist tradition.

By the mid-1930s Miller's stress on the here and now, once a voyou mode of survival, a part of the street ideology (with certain literary overtones), had become part of a system of ideas, had blossomed out to become a highly self-conscious and minutely differentiated affair, a construction that was anything but rigidly consistent, and frequently contradicted itself. In its radical form, namely in the Booster assertion that Paradise was the present, the insistence on the here and now was, nevertheless, an oddity in a society which, in spite of the traumatic World War, still drifted along in the 19th century's optimism, a century one which had accepted almost entirely the ideologies of progress and change. Moreover, the Boosters' contentment with the status quo stood out as highly unusual if not sacriligeous in a decade of political upheaval, the literary proponents of which had painted either the hopes of a Marxist future or the ideals of some classical past on their banners.

Turning in particular to mysticisms both of Eastern and Western provenance in order to substantiate their "new mythologies", Durrell and Miller tended to be interested in static and paradoxical world views which emphasised circularity rather than linearity, which stressed passivity rather than action and the possibility of change. In September 1937 Miller, for instance, had just read the Chuang Tzy, and confirmed again that Taoism is "the source and mainspring of my vitality"(Hamlet 284). The Millerian affinity to "the Chinese way of thinking"(ibid.) was, however, prepared, as he would have readily admitted, by a more indigenous tradition, by America's visionary individualists and anarchists: Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Emma Goldman, Mark Twain and others. "The American is a different animal, and he is primarily a non-political, non-cultural animal", said Miller, describing not only himself: "The American is a born anarchist"(WoH.6of). As Annette Baxter noted about a (later) preface to Life Without Principle, Miller praised John Brown and David Thoreau for rejecting the idea that the future held promise of an ideal life (ABHM.17). And on the back-cover of the fourth Booster, amidst quotations from Buddha and Laotse, the Upanishads and Emerson there is a central quotation from the "Song of Myself":

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

At times Miller's call for a pure view of reality presented itself in a guise of New World innocence: "'We are of this time, of the time of the earth', says my friend Saroyan", Miller wrote to Fraenkel in 1936: "That's good enough for me. Any time, so long as its of the earth, and no ghosts about it"(Hamlet 152). Saroyan reemphasised the notion in "Poem, Story, Novel", his contribution to the third Booster. But was this "time of the earth" really good enough for Miller? The answer is: sometimes it was, more often, it was not. In point of fact, in search for the purely 'real', he himself persistently turned the reader's eyes away from the earth, upwards to where all sorts of idealistic ghosts flitted about in merry confusion...

A cornerstone of the self-conception of the Boosters was the romantic notion of the artist-hero, which was in turn firmly linked with the "here and now" proposition. The Booster editorial said that the editors were living not in some fanciful dream, but in the real world, in the present, in their Golden Age. At first sight this seems nothing extraordinary. To those contemporaries, however, familiar with the manifold theories of "genius", of "great men" and of the "hero", which were widely influential in intellectual circles in the period between the wars, this announcement implied nothing less than that the Boosters, like many of their favorite writers ranging from Yeats and Wyndham Lewis to Eliot and D.H. Lawrence, felt they belonged to the tribe of artist-heroes, those "aristocrats of the spirit", to "the party of genius", which thinkers (especially Continental) like Miller's correspondent Hermann Graf Keyserling, the influential Oswald Spengler, the poet Stefan George or the Austrians Egon Friedell and Otto Weininger, had celebrated to such pernicious effect (8). "To be a poet is to be religious: and to be religious is to be, in some way, a royalist. Is it not so?" Lawrence Durrell asked that queer reactionary Potocki of Montalk in a letter and he only reflected the way the Boosters saw themselves. The Boosters were "poets", felt an inner affinity to the "superior individual", the genius or "the Exemplar" as Miller put it (Hamlet 226). Their poet, the "prime actor"(BB.223) was

a direct descendant of Carlyle's hero and of Nietzsche's superman. Their hero, the "genius" had also become the subject of modern scientific tomes, the works of psychologists such as C.Lombroso, W.Lange-Eichbaum, Kretschmer and others, many of which the Boosters had read. The notion of the paradigmatic individual played a central role in their aesthetic deliberations, and one of the most damning artistic criticisms they could think of was: "Everything is explainable without any reference to the phenomenon of genius"(NEW.x.14.272). The Boosters cultivated their proximity to (very often, identity with) this rare species, the man-monster-hero type who, according to Miller, included figures such as Tamerlane, Buddha, Christ, Lao Tse and Napoleon. We wll return to the profoundly political implications of this artist-as-hero proposition especially in the discussion of Miller's "The Enormous Womb" and in the chapter on "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster". The important point here is this, the hero's chief characteristic was that he lived resolutely in the present: "The hero is the man who says to himself - this is where things happen, not somewhere else. He acts as if he were at home in the world"(9). Against this background the Boosters' bantering insistence on the here and now takes on another depth of meaning.

Linked inseparably to the Boosters' conception of the artist as seer and hero was their preoccupation with what Otto Rank had called "the primal reality", i.e. the "womb". Significantly the title of the Booster essay from which Miller's hero quotation was taken is: "The Enormous Womb". Being in the present absolutely, the key precondition of all great art, was the consequence of nothing else than of what Miller termed: expanding "the womb-feeling" until it included the whole universe. The term "womb" was a metaphor implying familiarity, non-alienation, fertility, clarity and totality of vision. In contrast to the masses, said Miller, the artist-hero was one who regarded "the world as a womb, and not a tomb"(B.iv.20), and there was no mistaking that he saw himself in precisely these terms: "As far as I can make out, there is never anything but womb"(B.iv.20). With a consistency remarkable in a welter of contradictory pronouncements, Miller underlined in that essay what his editorial had stressed before : "The best world is that which is now this very moment"(B.iv.23). One might mention in passing that the November Booster was called the "Tri-

Lingual Womb Number", while the issue which followed was performed by "The Womb Sextette" and called the "Air-Conditioned Womb Number".

Expanding "the womb feeling" was a metaphor for the condition of the hero, "the Exemplar", and this metaphor, in Villa Seurat iconography, often took on quasi-religious dimensions. When the Booster editorial said that the editors saw the world without illusion, this implied not only that they were living in the Golden Age, in "the Paradise of the Ideal" as Miller had noted in his letter to Durrell. It meant not only that they regarded themselves as artist-heroes, but that they were (again the words from Miller's letter to Durrell) also "constantly with God". As a matter of fact, these were almost precisely the words with which the editors described themselves lightheartedly in the first editorial: "We are with God all the time, boosting his handi-work, assisting him, giving him a hand"(B.i.5).

Charles Glicksberg was not wrong when he said that for Miller "God" was a hyperbole, a "violent and for him appropriate literary metaphor", and "only the mysterious persona known as Miller raised to the highest degree"(Glicksberg 129). However, this was only one of a variety of meanings which the Villa Seurat gave to the term. "God" sometimes meant this, sometimes that. Referring to Miller, George Wickes put this in the following words: "What he means by God and religion is often hard to determine, because he is so completely eclectic in his views"(GWHM.10). Indeed, numerous streams fed into the Boosters' meandering notion about the artist's apotheosis. Very close to their view, however, was D.H. Lawrence, who had noted in 1922: "There is no universal law. Each being is, at his purest, a law unto himself, single, unique, a Godhead, a fountain from the unknown" (LSAT.10f). But, of course, Lawrence was not the only one who celebrated man's essential divinity, and the Boosters scavenged through the work of European romantics, American transcendentalists, Eastern mystics and others, to satisfy their autotheistic appetites. Modern psychology was scrutinised as well, "in meditation and reverence", the works of Jung and Otto Rank, who asserted, as we have noted above, in the Trauma of Birth that "each individual himself was once 'God' and can be so again, if or in so far as he can reinstate himself into the primal condition" (ORTB.131). The Villa Seurat's "God" in man, in

short, was original only in the unceremoniously comical way in which he was (occasionally) presented, or kicked in the pants (Cancer 10).

Durrell asked Miller: "When you say 'to be with God' do you identify yourself with God? Or do you regard the God-stuff reality as something extraneous towards which we yearn?". The answer he received was probably the most accurate he could hope for. Pressed for time and in a jocular mood, Miller simply noted that "sometimes you approach and sometimes you become" (Corr.110f). And, he might have added, sometimes you go beyond God as well (Cancer 104).

Still, the "God-stuff reality" touches the core of the Boosters' self-conception. There were two divergent main strands in the Villa Seurat's "God", concepts which often overlapped and mingled. Bearing little relation to the transcendent God of Christian Revelation, the two definitions usually pertained to some form of self-knowledge, but they differ in emphasis. They might be characterised as: the psycho-ecstatic definition and the quietist-Eastern definition.

As far as the former is concerned, in his short note to Durrell, Miller also promised to "dig up" an article by the German expressionist poet, Gottfried Benn, who had answered the question "nicely (via Storch) in an issue of transition" (Corr.111). This article, which Miller quoted in one of his interminable letters to Michael Fraenkel, is worth citing in part. Indicating one direction of Booster interest, that ever fascinating nexus between art and psychic disorder, it also provided (yet another) stone in the effort to create a new personal mosaic, a new individual mythology. Like the schizophrenic personality, Benn suggested, and the Boosters agreed, the artist holds the whole world, the whole universe past and future within himself(10). Benn came to the following conclusion:

In the creative periods which this disease sometimes brings with it he rises to the height of the magical master possessing ancient powers from another biological world, he emerges from archaic depths, there develops a world feeling, intoxicating, huge, cosmic, becomes himself mythos, he struggles with the demons of his fate in the mystical ecstasy of Indian introversion, he expands until he beholds ultimate things, he becomes God (Storch). (Hamlet 42)

Viewed from this angle, the Godhead/artist is the all-embracing magical creator, speaking in an ecstasy of enlightenment. But, as the frequently sexual overtones suggest, this condition was seldom more than shortlived: "The trouble is that when you wake up you're not in the womb"(Hamlet 276). The artist experiences the unio, is possessed - but it passes. Furthermore, as Miller was to point out again in his important studies of Balzac (which will be discussed in the chapter "Paris 1939: the Leave-Taking of Henry Miller"), one might be an artist, write inspired works - and still lead "the most stupid, aborted life that any intelligent man ever lived"(WoH.215). The artist prophesies but his gift of voices is time-bound, limited. Something is missing.

The Boosters felt close to the psychically disturbed human being. As the chapters on the second and third Delta will show, the character of Hamlet held a central position in the Villa Seurat pantheon. The third Booster editorial in fact describes the smiling Dane as a schizophrenic still walking "on the title page of the 20th century" (B.iii.5). The same editorial ends with the little ditty from the "Ballad of Krethsmerian Types", and the Boosters describe themselves as: "COMING OF EPILIPTOID STOCK". Gottfried Benn had spoken of "the epiliptoid mixture of the genesis of our personality" (Hamlet 42) - and the Boosters probably agreed. Henry Miller said: "All my life I have felt a great kinship with the madman and the criminal" (CosE.335). Rank had analysed in detail the relation between the neurotic and the artist and the Boosters compared their own condition to that of neurotics and schizophrenics, especially to such iridescent personalities as the dancer Nijinsky, whose astrological portrait Conrad Moricand conjured in the second issue of Delta. Anais Nin described a visit to St.Anne in "Le Merle Blanc" in the first Booster. Texts such as Antonia White's "The House of Clouds" from the second Delta and Reichel's disturbed "Letter for the Gostersools" from the

third Booster were considered deeply human documents. Schizophrenia was terrible, but preferable, they were certain, to a grey "normal" vision of reality. With more enthusiasm than originality they searched in this field, discovering many parallels and analogies between themselves and madmen. Happily, however, the position of the artist-hero (and that of "God", one hopes) was similar to one Salvador Dali once summed up wonderfully when he said that the only difference between himself and a madman was that he was not mad.

In the Boosters' view (and that of Rank's Art and Artist), however, the artist was incomplete - unless he also succeeded in making his life a work of art, which brings us to the other, the quietistic-Eastern definition of the Villa Seurat's "God".

According to this interpretation, the artist's apotheosis was less a sporadic and ecstatic phase of creativity, a sudden revelation of "self". Rather, it proceeded from the short-lived experience of illumination along calmer and more meditative routes, moving in the direction of that permanent inner peace and indifference to the world so characteristic of Miller's favourites, the Chinese mystics. The objective was a quiet self-knowledge and self-possession, a Boddhisatva peace, a condition beyond art, or rather: the condition of having made one's life into a work of art. This was the goal. What Miller called "the highest type of man" finally achieves it, "a balance, an inner balance, which reconciles him to the world"(Hamlet 225). He also said that this higher type "becomes a thoroughly anarchic, timeless individual. He relates himself to God, which is equivalent to saying that he discovers the Holy Ghost within him" (Hamlet 225). It was this form of mundane quietism which, as war drew closer, moved increasingly into the foreground of Miller's deliberations. Although in his last months in Paris he came to feel that the Booster's clowninge and merriment had offset the earnest pursuit of this objective, its shadows had already flitted through the review's pages. In early 1939, however, a quietistic passivity became for Miller an exacting rule of conduct, a maxim for action, and the injunction: "Art is only the stepping-stone to another, larger way of life"(WoH.249), as we will see in the chapter "Paris 1939: The Leave-Taking of Henry Miller", for once rang true.

Villa Seurat discussions about "God" in the Booster days, however, were usually in a more playful, probing and provocative mood. Although Anais Nin suspected behind these talks a male plot to confuse woman and angrily described as nonsense "this 'I am God', which makes creation an act of solitude and pride, this image of God alone making sky, earth, sea"(AN.ii.233), the Booster spirit was one of levity, and the editors' "God" was not beyond mockery, as they boosted his handiwork! In the penulimate Delta of Autumn 1938, nevertheless, the more serious side began to emerge strongly as Durrell gave expression to the "I AM A MAN - I AM AN ARTIST - I AM GOD" progression which he envisaged for his friend Henry Miller. We will discuss it in detail in the chapter on the Dismemberment Delta. In the lead editorial, however, this pivotal aspect of Villa Seurat art was no more than touched upon with characteristic playfulness, in so casual a manner, that an uninitiated reader might easily miss or mistake it for a little joke: "boosting his handiwork"...

Miller's "Peace! It's Wonderful!", printed during the Munich Crisis, is the source of another autotheistic quotation, a long, but elucidating parallel to the Booster editorial. Like "The Enormous Womb", it pointed out the Villa Seurat's alternative "way of life" and gave a clue as to how to achieve it.

> Before this inward change came about I used to think that we were living in extraordinarily difficult times. Like most men I thought that our time was the worst possible time. And no doubt it is - for those, I mean, who still say 'our time'. As for myself, I've thrown away the calendar by which one reckons the lean and the fat years. For me it is all gravy, one continuous, marvellous stream of time without beginning or end. Yes, the times are bad, permanently bad - unless one becomes immune, becomes God. Since I have become God I go the whole hog always. I am absolutely indifferent to the fate of the world. I have my own world and my own private fate. I make no reservations and no compromises. I accept. I am - and that is all. (Seven.iii.19)

The key to the Boosters' Golden Age was two-fold: it implied a demonstrative "acceptance" of the world around them, the "world-as-is" (B.iv.23), on the one hand, combined, paradoxically, with a deep dissociation from "the fate of the world", from history, from society and mankind in general on the other. Individually these two facets of the Villa Seurat outlook are difficult to understand in rational terms; when mingled, they are next to incomprehensible. Moreover, from a humanist standpoint one cannot but radically question their implications...

The Boosters, however, had little in common with progressive humanists, social reformers and revolutionaries alike. In an intentionally extreme contrast to these starry-eyed "quacks", the activists of the day, literary and otherwise, who like David Gascoyne held to "the 'Idealism' of believing that the world could be fundamentally changed by revolutionary action of any kind"(Labrys.v.68), Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell accepted it as it was. They accepted it, they said, without reservation. What did this mean, and what did it imply?

George Orwell pointed out the strong affinity between Henry Miller and Walt Whitman in his "Inside the Whale", noting that "nearly everyone who has read him has remarked on this"(CE.i.547). Many years later Karl Shapiro again called Miller "the 20th century reincarnation of Whitman". Shapiro also praised the "acceptance" position as being (on one level) "the poetry of cosmic consciousness"(11). This view (rather than Orwell's more sceptical and sober considerations) agreed with Miller, for he and his friends conceived of reality, even a reality denuded of ideals and hope, as a source of wonder and mystery, "the original chaos, the seat of creation itself"(B.iv.21), multifarious and marvellous (CosE.173). It was a reality furthermore which was inaccessible to the rational mind, forever eluding what Durrell called "the vague patterns of our conceptual schemes" (Purpose.xi.2.85). This reality was replete with contradiction, and if the aspiration was to see it as it was (vide the postulation of the Booster editorial) then a special, paradoxical, "accepting" way of seeing was plainly required.

The frequency with which the Villa Seurat wrote about their "generous" vision, about "acceptance", gives some idea of its elusive, at any rate, ambiguous qualities. One element, however, remained fairly consistent throughout: "acceptance", it seems, required a mind robust enough to sustain a paradox, many paradoxes and many contradictions, in fact; it needed a mind which had mastered what Miller termed "the equilibrist's art", i.e. the ability to hold opposites, contradictory truths in one's consciousness at the same time. Again Walt Whitman was the great example: "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself". It was this heirloom from the "Song of Myself", which the Booster's first editorial playfully alluded to when it said: "We are not ashamed to contradict ourselves or to make a mistake" (B.i.5). The Boosters too were large, contained multitudes, and were demonstratively "non-consistent", as their self-advertisement ran.

The Boosters' many-sidedness, the possible co-existence of two or more truths made for a certain flexibility and even tolerance, necessitated (as far as their magazine was concerned) an undogmatic and open consideration of all material submitted. The review (thus the Booster's first editorial) "will be eclectic, flexible, alive"(B.i.5). As we will have occasion to show in the chapters dealing with "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster" and with Durrell's poetry Deltas, this kind of eclecticism, issuing directly from the "acceptance" outlook, was also an editorial position consciously designed to loosen up what was felt to be a rigid little magazine world. It was a sane and sensible position. "If we were dogmatic it would only be because we were uncertain of ourselves" reads the third editorial: "That is why we are not dogmatic but phrenetic,..."(12).

But as so often, the earthy and good-humoured face of the Booster Janus had another, more serious countenance, for the Booster mythologists (occasionally) asserted the right to contradict themselves to such a degree that the very notion of a truth, even only a personal, temporary truth, became redundant. This radical interpretation of the "acceptance" outlook was enunciated in Miller's "The Enormous Womb", where he says: "I believe everything, good and bad. I believe more and less than what is true. I believe beyond the whole corpus of man's thinking. I believe everything"(B.iv.23). Of course, Miller did not

believe everything, and when Durrell claimed at the end of his Black Book: "I accept everything and examine nothing"(BB.223) this too was a crude exaggeration, but nevertheless consistent with the Whitmanesque heritage as well as with the mystical approach, the objective of which was generally "to embrace the apparently conflicting opposites" (B.iv.22).

A conscious part of the Boosters' rejection of logically consistent systems of thought, moral and ethical and aesthetic, the ideal of accepting contradictions was also a way of silencing the critic. "Dear reader", the cultural historian Egon Friedell once shrewdly noted, "seeing that I already contradict myself so often, it is really not necessary that you contradict me as well"(13). Like the editorials' pervasive and almost monotonous levity of tone, persistent self-contradiction was a way of bringing about a critical silence in which the Boosters could act out their clowneries, commit their inconsistencies and spin out their private and irregular cosmological patterns.

No matter, then, that "acceptance" of the world went hand in hand with a most thorough "rejection" of many aspects of reality. Seeing and accepting the world-as-is required an individual who had freed himself from what Miller called the bounds of tradition, the collective norms, 'idealisms' which directed the rest of mankind(14). This free 'unprincipled' individual was the antinomian ideal aspired to in The Black Book; in that portrait of the artist as young man, Durrell put it in the following words: "The whole question, in essence, is acceptance, the depersonalization of self, of the society one has absorbed"(BB.146). An individual who had shed "society" and thus found himself, was considered "supremely aware", partaking, as Miller's "Womb" article said, of the "intense state of awareness" of the hero-artist and able to accept "life for what it is"(B.iv.22).

The Boosters' Golden Age then, their world without illusion, was accessible if one "accepted" everything. It did not matter if one harboured extreme prejudices and expressed the most violent distastes: there was always the "we are not dogmatic" and "we are not ashamed to contradict ourselves" to fall back upon. In contrast to what the first editorial had proclaimed, the second one, for example, spoke out against "tout ce qui est banal et conventionel, plat et gonflé, stupide et intellectuel, trop sale et trop propre, obscène et pudique, bigot et irréligieux, anarchique et dictatorial"(B.ii.5f). The fact that one editorial contradicted the next, one line the following, did not perturb the assurance of the "acceptance" view. On the contrary...

Although many of the above quotations are taken from Miller's writings, it must be understood that he was not the only Booster who walked in the footsteps of Walt Whitman. G.S.Fraser said that Durrell's was "a message of acceptance of life, an acceptance tinged with a very deep sadness, but in the end reverent and joyous..." (FrLD.41). Praising a work method "that is neither partial nor exclusive", Durrell himself noted in an essay on E.Graham Howe published shortly before the outbreak of the war that: "the law for living beside the Truth is the law of acceptance" (Purpose.xi.2.85f). Later, after the war had actually started, Durrell was to criticise Miller's "myopic" view. "There is something deeply wrong about his attitude towards the world", he wrote to Anais Nin: "In some inner way he refuses to grow"(AN.iii.7). In the years before the war, however, Durrell's own attitude had closely approximated Miller's.

In the autumn of 1938 William Saroyan said: "The latest thing I've learned is minor, unimportant, not likely to shake the world to the roots, quite likely to bore people who are trying to save the world, and yet a thing I cannot pass over lightly: I am losing my hair" (Townsman.i.4.2). The Boosters' "law of acceptance" operated along similar lines. It found expression implicitly in the third editorial which casually listed and mingled banality with horror: "wine is going up per liter: panic is coming down like a dropping lift" (B.iii.5). If there existed a distinction at all, the personal, the price of wine, took precedence - on principle. More emphatically, the "law of acceptance" shone through the lead editorial's pronouncement: "For us

things are all right just as they are. In fact, everything is excellent - including the high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not" (B.i.5).

The Booster's acceptance of the here and now implied a most questionable sanction of the status quo of human affairs (15). In his article on E.Graham Howe, Durrell expressed amazement that the "acceptance" proposition needed to be restated at all: "To love, to withhold judgement, to accept reality - it is strange that such a set of simple rules have to be formulated again for this age" (Purpose.xi.2.89f). From a humanist standpoint it is, on the contrary, strange that in the panic-laden spring of 1939 anyone should seriously consider discussing the "I accept" of Henry Miller and Walt Whitman as a philosophical basis of conduct. George Orwell rightly pointed out in a cataloque of horrors (which was oddly reminiscent of the kind of listings Miller and the surrealists indulged in):

> To say 'I accept' in an age like our own is to say that you accept concentration camps, rubber truncheons, Hitler, Stalin, bombs, aeroplanes, tinned food, machine-guns, putsches, purges, slogans, Bedaux belts, gas-masks, submarines, spies, provocateurs, press censorship, secret prisons, aspirins, Hollywood films and political murders. (CE.i.548)

Orwell explained the "acceptance" proposition as one aspect of the usual non-moral, non-political passivity of the "ordinary man" (CE.i.548f), and indeed, Miller's way of thinking and feeling did originate there. As he wrote to Perlès in 1935: in Paris no one "dreams of a life without dirt, without poverty, without sorrow, misery, disease, death, disaster"(ARNY.136). By the late 1930s, however, as we have said, what little there was left of "ordinary man" sentiment in Miller had become encrusted, lovingly ornamented by various 'cosmological' concepts, stylised and radicalised to new 'heroic' heights. Still, the moral question which Orwell's listing posed remained, in spite of the fact that when he wrote "Inside the Whale" for various reasons he could not bring himself to condemn Miller's irresponsibility wholeheartedly(16). This question naturally pertained to the Booster as well: was the conscious acceptance of violence and murder as an 'inevitable' part of life really a

defensible position? In the Boosters' (published) opinion, in the wake of Whitman, of various mystics and the Zarathustrian Nietzsche, it certainly was. The world would "always be a trying place to live in"... (B.i.5).

In Saroyan's "The Man with the Heart in the Highlands", a short story published in the second Booster, a family almost starves to death - but poverty and hunger and surviving on bird-seeds lack all sinister aspects. On the contrary, suffering was presented as somehow beneficial. Similarly, with the teachings of Lao Tse in mind, Lawrence Durrell said in 1939: "without the acceptance of the negative element there is no real wholeness and richness" (Purpose.xi.2.89). On the contrary, the "negative element" was supremely important, as Miller once said, "equally if not more important than the good things" (AO.35).

We have earlier pointed out the quote from Keyserling which Miller used in his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere", where the German philosopher spoke of a future élite: "we who are spiritual should consciously assume the counterpoint attitude to everything which is going on to-day"(CosE.190). This kind of oppositon on principle was the obverse, the serious side to the joking techniqe of disappointing the reader's expectation which we have referred to in our discussion of the Booster letter. It is well worth noting that in a letter to Miller, the admired Céline advised: "Know how to be wrong - the world is full of people who are right." And the doctor from Clichy added: "That's why it is so NAUSEATING" (WRMC.7W). The differences between Miller - "Always merry and bright!" - and the author of Voyage au bout de la nuit have been been indicated above. But was it no more than a pure coincidence that a sentence from the Booster's first editorial repeated the misanthropic Céline's advice almost verbatim? "There are so many people who profess to be in the right that we see no harm in being wrong now and then" (B.i.5).

In his books Miller always insisted on accentuating his own brutal and unsavoury character traits, stealing money from blind newspaper vendors and whores, for instance, and he is quoted by Brassai as saying that hell always attracted him more than heaven (HMGN.190). It was, to be sure, not the hell of Céline, for Miller never ruled out the "positive element", the possibilty of heaven on earth. Concentrating in the manner of the mystics on the "most repulsive aspects of existence" (Glicksberg 129) was regarded as an integral part of arriving at a vision of the whole, a positive, accepting view, in other words.

It was also an aspect of Villa Seurat dramaturgy. The selection of literary material for its entertainment or shock value was glibly alluded to in the first editorial: "if we can't have quality then we want what is downright wretched: Because what is bad is often better than what is just good"(B.i.5).

More solemnly, Miller remarked to his friends Larry and Fred in Art and Outrage: "Always underneath, you see, this idea of 'acceptance' - which is Whitman's great theme, his contribution"(AO.35). Acceptance of opposites, acceptance of the negative sides of existence especially, this is the impression conveyed, was the one foundation underlying everything: their art, their attitudes as expressed in articles, letters and interviews, their life in general. Nevertheless, in none of these closely related fields, their art, their lives and their attitudes, was the notion of acceptance accepted quite as straightforwardly as their invocations sometimes suggest.

The Boosters' "law of acceptance" was, in fact, a highly equivocal affair, not as clear cut as the well-shaped yin-yang symbol of the Taoists might suggest. We are not referring to the fact that what posed as an essentially stoical, passive recognition of violence frequently turned into an irresponsible celebration of the same(17). It was rather this: the Boosters vociferously accepted everything, including violence and death and torture in theory - but in practice they accepted the 'negative elements' only for others.

The Boosters were happy, living in the Golden Age, next door to "God", their paradise was inclusive, did not shut out evil - so they said. They accepted the world, its horrors, its bombers and Guernicas and war and brutality - so they claimed. But as a matter of fact, neither in their art, nor in real life nor even in their discursive oeuvre did the Boosters follow their own "law for living beside the Truth" (Purpose.xi.2.85f) undeviatingly.

As we will have occasion to show in a chapter on the Villa Seurat and the Munich Crisis, Miller's "Chinese" attitude crumbled when put to the test of reality. The Boosters did not feel that "high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not" really contributed to wholeness and richness of life at all. "The cannons belong, like everything else" Miller had cried in the Booster days, but when they were directed at him he (naturally) wished them away with all his heart. The shout that "Everything belongs" (B.iv.24) was brutally put to silence - for a time.

In an early letter to Anais Nin, Miller had expressed his ambitious aim: "I must be the one person in the world to risk everything, tell everything"(LtAN.68). In their poetry and prose the Boosters always insisted that all topics and subjects, all forms of experience, should or could be treated. Nothing should be excluded - for moral or ethical reasons, or those of 'taste'. "Nothing human, however shocking, is to be concealed or glossed over", Charles Glicksberg wrote in an article on Henry Miller, adding: "Like the Surrealists with whom he has much in common without swallowing their aesthetic as a whole, he finds everything in the world, the ugly, the hideous, the feculent, a source of wonder, a miracle in the making" (Glicksberg 129). But accepting something as subject matter in a book, and accepting a condition of pain and misery as the unchangeable condition for other human beings, is something entirely different. This difference, however, the Boosters, who tended to see life in terms of art, did not recognise. Their ideal was the hero for whom life "reveals itself ... as art" (B.iv.20), and consequently the artistic "law of acceptance" applied to life as well....

Although the 'acceptance' proposition entailed a certain openess as regards subject matter (vide the eclectic editorial policies of the Booster and Delta), it was anything but a clear and consistent criterion for their art. In real terms, they did not 'accept' everything in their writing at all, but selected and formed their material as most artists did. In the chapter on "The Sonnet of Hamlet", we will discuss the problems involved in the impossible aesthetic prescriptions which followed from the 'acceptance' outlook: "There are no canons - should be none" or "everything must be included" (BB.66).

As far as 'acceptance' in their discursive work, in their philosophy, was concerned, we would like to draw attention to a crucial ambivalence in the Booster standpoint, a curious double vision, a dual outlook which revealed two worlds, two spheres of existence, two chronologies even, which contrast markedly in relevance and reality. There was the personal (inner and outer) world of the individual, of the artist-hero. This world was everything. Then there was the anonymous outside world of society, culture, history, and this world was nothing. In the view of the Villa Seurat, these two spheres did not overlap, hardly even touch. The split, which defies rational explanation, was alluded to in the above quotation from "Peace! It's Wonderful!" when Miller said: "I have my own world and my own private fate" (Seven.iii.19). He meant it quite literally. And when the Boosters claimed that unlike most men, they were living in the Golden Age, they meant it literally as well. For a long time their Golden world at the Villa Seurat impasse and on sunny Corfu was indeed hardly touched by the other, terrible world outside. This peculiar double vision spoke from a letter to Michael Fraenkel (Dec.1935) in which Miller pointed out "that while accepting the Spenglerian theory as an historical pattern valid for the description of big movements, I do not accept it as applying to the individual artist"(Hamlet 108). If one wants to understand why Miller's work was informed by a curious cheerfulness, why he continued to write as war drew nearer, this is the answer. He was certain that the individual artist was exempt, that Henry Miller was exempt: "As far as Europe goes, as far as America goes, I am one hundred percent for and with Spengler. But when it comes to myself I draw the line"(Hamlet 108f). Sitting in the heart of Europe, in a studio in the Villa Seurat, "inside the whale" as it

were, Miller and the Booster were outside: "Like Lawrence I have put myself outside this time. I disown it"(Hamlet 109). Miller and the Boosters 'accepted' war and dissolution and cannons and high grade bombers (manifestations of the Spenglerian historical cycle) for Europe and America - but not as realities for themselves. Western civilisation was falling to pieces, the situation was hopeless - but not for the Boosters. Far from "accepting" their time, they disowned it. It was as simple as that - in theory.

This split vision informed their art as well. As we will see, in his Hamlet essay in the second Delta and in his "The Sonnet of Hamlet", Durrell sketched out (with Freudian assistance) a protagonist divided between between "The Prince and Hamlet" (thus the title of one of his essays), between the ego/superego on the one side and the id on the other. His sympathies, like those of the other Boosters, were of course wholeheartedly with the inner man, "the creature living in a new chronology, the new universe, which we call insanity" (NEW.x.14.271). This inner man mattered, he alone; anything to do with the Prince was unimportant, his social constrictions, his poses and affiliations, his responsabilities and his historical situation.

Analogously, it seems, Miller was angry with Michael Fraenkel who persisted "in throwing me back into the historical stream"(Hamlet 108). Miller thought he lived, as it were, the passionate, illogical, irresponsible, misanthropic and, in a manner, timeless id. He said: "I am living in the future, even though by the calendar I may be living three days behind the precise chronological moment"(Hamlet 109).

In another letter to Fraenkel, Miller proffered a more metaphysical explanation. He distinguished between his temporal self and his mythical, cosmological self. The former, that "part of me which belongs to the world, to the collective life, to culture and tradition, yes - it is doomed"(Hamlet 274); the other part, however, "a living part of the cosmos", the artist part, was not doomed, and it was only this part which mattered. In point of fact, however, Miller ignored (as long as he could) that "temporal" self, believed he could live only his "cosmological" part, presented himself accordingly in his writing (and in the Booster editorial), and did not, in short,

conduct himself as if he were threatened at all (18). The idea that he and his friends might one day be drawn into the whirlpool of public events, was no more than a phantom. In spite of all "acceptance", the Boosters disowned their time, at least as far as social, economic and political phenomena were concerned. "We are not interested in political line-ups, nor social panaceas, nor economic nostrums"(B.i.5) said the Booster editorial, and Miller noted in the Trotskyite Partisan Review that he was "thoroughly disinterested in politics, whether American, Chinese or European"(NMHM.31)..

Sometimes, admittedly, they did take a certain interest in the development of the world outside. This, however, tended to occur only in the following instances: when they were immediately threatened by political events themselves, when some horror scenario stimulated their aesthetic imagination, or when their Spenglerian visions of catastrophe seemed to confirm themselves. The first of these situations materialised in the summer and autumn of 1938 and will be treated in detail in "Before the Special Peace and Dismemberment Delta: The Villa Seurat and the Munich Crisis".

In 1937, however, the Villa Seurat denizens still thought of themselves as outside observers of a magnificent apocalyptic spectacle, inwardly detached and indifferent, but enjoying the show, especially the more blood-thirsty numbers, just the same. It was all a part of the "entertainment" which the Booster letter had posited. "I am absolutely indifferent to the fate of the world" Miller said (Seven.iii.19), but just as the real joy in the apocalyptic vision was possibly also that it relieved the individual from guilt and resposibilty, the world in its "death" throes, so neatly analysed by Fraenkel and his Death School, served as an colourful pageant, as useful and even necessary material for artists like Miller and Durrell.

The world, its fragmented culture and disintegrating present, was a great extravaganza, a gold mine for the observing poet, who was safe in his "interstellar realm in which one rolls along with sublime indifference"(Seven.iii.21) - and with an American or British passport in one's pocket. The poet was free to speculate and juggle ideas and information to his heart's content - wholly indifferent to the world. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Miller, for instance, commented cleverly on Elie Faure's "attempt to prove a definite relationship between war and the birth of men of genius" (Hamlet 205), and in 1938 he began "The All-Intelligent Explosive Rocket", a short comical satire stimulated by the bombings of civilians in China and Spain, which even his friends did not find very funny (Martin 325). In the same vein the third Booster editorial proclaimed that it was a poet's world: "the fractured pieces of the world", the battleships and the dead "being shovelled into the graves" were there waiting to be assembled by his hands. The world and its horrors offered a Wagnerian backdrop before which the Boosters cheerfully sang, and Miller, at least, did not pretend otherwise. "I am singing while Rome burns", he wrote to Michael Fraenkel, and he added significantly: "Rome has to burn in order for a guy like me to sing"(19).

The "death" of the world was the burning backdrop for their art - but often (not always) the flames seem curiously artificial. The Boosters' ventures into the extra-individual world were sometimes flawed by a certain lifelessness, manifest especially in the tendency to assemble heaps of horrific imagery and to unload them onto a numbed reader. The canvasses, painted to depict the Spenglerian prophecies, were oddly anaemic - because the Boosters themselves were missing. "Art requires indifference" (AN.ii.111), said Miller, but art requires presence as well. The catastrophes so meticulously enumerated frequently lack the power to terrify, for the author plainly did not believe in them himself. Referring to Black Spring, a fragment of which was reprinted in the Booster, George Wickes noted: "Miller lists plenty of horrors, only to forget them immediately, so that the theme of impending doom in the title is never taken seriously"(AiP.270). Similarly, G.S.Fraser reported about Philip O'Connor's reaction to The Black Book that "he dislikes the isolated treatment of feeling and images, that leaves the larger human background out of focus; he wants the whole photograph to

have some sort of shape and not merely to be a sort of fuzz behind selected curios in the foreground"(Seven.vii.22).

What mattered primarily to Miller and friends was the foreground, those curios, the individual human beings, living "the restricted life" (Hamlet 51). Miller's restricted life - one can understand the preoccupation with pre-natal security, with the condition of exile, and later with the loneliness of Big Sur - did not include anything which significantly qualified the sense of warmth and non-alienation, the feeling that one was singular, that one's vision was total. The "restricted life" did not take into account (except as a fuzz) social and political complexities, and it did not include (except as an entertaining but impersonal panoramic painting) the grander movements toward the downfall of Western Civilisation. Consequently, the themes around which many of the Booster and Delta contributions circled were rightly described by themselves as "Non-Contemporary". Their subject matter was one of a romantic personalism, "timeless" topics such as Love, Nature, Birth, Death, Myth, God, Art, the Child, "THE WORD", as the third editorial said, rather than "words"(B.iii.5). What a thematic orientation such as this implied in a little magazine world in which left wing periodicals like New Verse or the Left Review still predominated, will be a matter of constant reference in the chapters which follow, treated especially, however, in "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster", in "The First Poetry Delta: April 1938", and "Lawrence Durrell in London: Editing the Second Poetry Delta". The term "restricted life", incidentally, is taken from a letter to Fraenkel in which Miller commented on Huxley's words about El Greco's refusal to leave "the belly of the whale"...(Hamlet 51).

The Boosters were "Non-Political" as their advertisement ran, their interest in politics in a narrower sense was negligible. For a time, as we have seen, Anais Nin was deeply involved in the propaganda struggle for the Spanish Republic in Paris, a fact which seems to belie the notion of a Villa Seurat detachment. It is true, she did not share Miller's detachment and the idea of 'acceptance' was for her never an excuse not to care about other human beings. Still, in the end she did hold on to the view that the outer struggle, "the greater dramas over our heads" were born from the inner drama (20). This came

suspiciously close to the position of Henry Miller, who felt, like herself, that the struggles within the individual always took precedence. The young woman who often criticised Miller's indifference and lack of compassion, noted in all seriousness at the height of the Spanish Civil War in Autumn 1937: "It would be simpler, shorter, swifter not to seek this deepening perspective to my life and lose myself in the simple world drama of war, hunger, death"(21).

Once, according to the romantic autobiographies both of Miller and Durrell, they had "identified" with the collective world drama, with the outside, defined by the former as "the 'other', that which is not himself" (MFBD.40). This was a dangerous mistake, since it held one shackled, filled with guilt, kept one from self-knowledge. Commenting on a quotation from "The Enormous Womb", Frederick J. Hoffman described this error in the following way: "The effort to take the law unto oneself, to make oneself the crucial moral center of the universe, so fixed upon the self the burden of responsibility for man's collective sinning that the single self cannot well bear it"(3Dec.46). Lawrence Durrell said: "I have recovered from the wounds already - other men, they were my wounds"(22). Now they were indifferent to other men. In fact, like their hero D.H.Lawrence, Miller and Durrell may be said to have held the masses in contempt and Miller especially was always good for a blunt insult: in a Capricorn excerpt printed in the second Delta he mocked the "men of the future world saturated with shit" (D.ii.52). He indicated the direction he had gone: "Out of the swarm - out of nullity and nightmare!"(23). Their escape from society, so they felt, had been successful, their dissociation so complete that all public events which did not threaten them personally left them pretty well indifferent. "I believe in nothing except what is active, immediate and personal" (Alf Letter 8).

Unlike many of their contemporaries, the Boosters (along with Goethe, St. Augustine, Rousseau and Bill Saroyan) did not believe that political, economic or social questions ought to be the artist's prime concern(LMObs.325). The true artist, said Miller, addressing himself to Breton's surrealists and his English acolytes, was the exact "opposite of the politically-minded individual, the opposite of the reformer, the opposite of the idealist"(CosE.189). Saroyan said: "The

saving of the world I leave to those who are too stupid to save themselves" (Townsman.i.4.2), and the Boosters agreed with all their heart. We have quoted the first editorial's cutting remarks about the "quacks" who were out to change the world: worse than these, in the view of the Villa Seurat, were the "artists" who wrongly conceived of art as an agit-prop operation - and these constituted the literary mainstream in the mid 1930s. The Booster's third editorial put it thus: "The poet today has become the world's house-keeper, buttering his bread with a fountain-pen, and writing poetry with his knife" (B.iii.5). George Orwell's biographer Bernard Crick said: "Some writers felt the need, as when Yeats in his poem 'Politics' mocked Thomas Mann, to defend the very existence and irrelevance of poetry" (BCGO.271). The Boosters belonged to this minority. The one and true essential, in their view, was personal and individual, the absolute duty to one's own self.

An example pertaining to the Booster's position on violence: like Lawrence, Miller, though an extreme pacifist and a peace-loving man (according to Perlès), did not condemn the use of violence on principle. He said in 1939 that it was "possible that I might murder a man in anger". This would, however, be the act of an individual, and thus a question of personal responsibility. Society or social morality had nothing to do with it. He absolutely refused to kill for a "government advocating war"(NMHM.32) or in the name of some anonymous abstraction, as Orwell discovered when he visited Miller in 1936 on the way to Spain to fight for "democracy" and "freedom"(24). In Aaron's Rod Lawrence once expressed his longing to kill his enemies, never, however, "as a unit in a vast obscene mechanism". In a marginal comment on that passage Miller noted: "Precisely my sentiments" (AR.39). It is not impossible to feel a certain sympathy with this categorical protest against the denigration of man to a tiny wheel in an anonymous political machine. Wholly unrealistic, on the other hand, was his faith in the individual. Like Lawrence, Miller thought the individual should be his own judge and his own jury, the only accepted, but undoubtedly somewhat biased, authority. If he acted sincerely according to spontaneous desires, Lawrence thought, he was justified in everything he did, even in committing a murder. It is small wonder that the critic John Harrison noted that Lawrence's

remarks on violence reveal homicidal tendencies that sometimes strike one as "near lunatic" and "reminiscent of the worst features of German fascism"(25). Nevertheless, Miller wholly agreed with Lawrence and in 1944 he cheered Alfed Perlès' decision to join the British Army: "It took courage and enlightenment on his part. So I say:'Kill, Alf, kill to your heart's content! And God bless you wherever you are!'"(26).

It was wholly consistent with an anti-social individualism that Miller frequently spoke of the necessity of becoming a traitor to the human race (Seven.iii.21). This should be read quite literally. All great men had, in his opinion, been singularly "unsocial and anarchic - and beyond all that sublimely indifferent to the fate of others" (Hamlet 335). All great men would have welcomed high grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not, and not cared a fig about the mass of potential victims, the "trash" that did not matter anyway (Seven.iii.20).

Like Otto Rank, Miller shared the belief of his great antecedent Friedrich Nietzsche, that man was "only the stepping stone to a higher type". Although in a drab January 1938, he did add speculatively: "or perhaps a lower type"(Hamlet 333), one thing was certain: man was doomed, that "great mass of mankind", at any rate, "the mob, the people, who create the permanently bad times" (Seven.iii.20). This, however, did not worry him; on the contrary, with penetrating regularity he said how glad he was that the old would be finally swept away, that a "new man" would appear. After the Munich Crisis, he wrote with renewed élan: "the destruction of our cultural world, which seems more than ever assured now by the impending smashup, is really a blessing in disguise"(WoH.85). We will return to this chiliastic optimism below.

Essentially, however, as he repeatedly affirmed, the fate of the mankind did not touch him. He felt that one should not worry about, "the external pattern" (Hamlet 225). It was a waste of time. Sending a message of similar import to a convalescent George Orwell in April 1938, he advised complete passivity: "you get to really know something about yourself - and thru yourself the world"(27). All problems, and this included social and economic tensions and even wars, were

individual in the end, and so it is on the individual that one should concentrate: "War is not an economic affair, nor a curse of the gods, nor an inevitability: it is the reflection of an inner split, the projection of our continuous repressed lusts and hatreds"(WoH.86). Miller noted: "Society is made up of individuals. It is the individual who interests me - not the society"(CosE.159). Consequently, real solutions could never be collective but had to be individual, and absolutist that he was, this could only mean: a complete change of heart, a change, in fact, of the kind the Booster editorials posited. Nothing else would do. "Anything less than a change of heart is a sure catastrophe"(Seven.iii.19). For the mass of mankind, he had come to feel by the end of the decade, it was probably too late; with them no change of heart would occur (Hamlet 409).

In its own eyes, the Villa Seurat was vitally interested, "like God" (AO.27), only in the individual and his quest for self-possession. This was the core and the point of departure, everything else more or less insignificant:

> The artist does not tinker with the universe: he recreates it out of his own experience and understanding of life. He knows that the transformation must proceed from within outward, not vice versa. The world problem becomes the problem of the Self. The world problem is the projection of the inner problem. It is a process of expropriating the world, of becoming God. (CosE.189)

One of the most pertinent commentators on Henry Miller, the philosopher Ludwig Marcuse, once noted about another romantic, Arthur Schopenhauer, that his work knew no past, no present and no future. Schopenhauer showed no interest whatsoever in the history of mankind, in any specific historical situation or in mankind's hopes for the future. The reason was that differences between the epochs seemed to him insignificant compared to their similarities, and salvation a task for the individual and not for society (LMMG.177). It is not clear whether Miller was familiar with the ideas of Shopenhauer in his Paris years (he did in 1943 review a Schopenhauer biography by one Walter Lowrie for The New Statesman), but one is tempted to say that his work was informed by similar assumptions. Aside from the emphasis on the individual and his salvation, there was also in Miller the concomitant

notion that the condition of man would always remain the same. This was combined with what appears to be passionate anti-historicism. Indeed, while admiring Cancer and Black Spring, the young David Gascoyne thought Miller's outlook, which he termed "irresponsible fatalism", the result of an "ignorance of historical cause and effect and of blindness to social and economic realities" (Comment.ii.39.88). This interpretation however needs closer investigation.

Gascoyne himself called Miller's "a life spent at the heart of the modern world"(ibid.), for plainly, as the Booster/Delta excerpts from Black Spring and Capricorn reveal, the American was not at all blind to the brutal realities of city culture around him. It was only that he did not think much of the usual socio-economic explanations of the kind that young David Gascoyne had in mind. Miller said: "I put no trust in the men who explain life to us in terms of history, economics, art, etc. They are the fellows who bugger us up, juggling their abstract ideas"(CosE.158). Had he been less concerned with parading the Hemingway primitive, he might have said that he put no trust in certain constructions. Karl Shapiro claimed:"Like most Americans, he shares the view of the first Henry Ford that history is bunk" (TC.i.3.33). This is simply not true. Just as Miller's 'non-political' stance was different from that of the thirties generation but had profound political implications nevertheless, so his own view of human history issued from premises quite different from those of Gascoyne, but they were historico-cultural constructions just the same, most frequently, to be more precise, a curious amalgamation of Spengler and Nietzsche.

We have spoken of the Booster's dual vision, the disjunction of the personal and the collective, the editors' Golden Age and the Hell of the Outside World, and we called it a split. Actually, from Miller's standpoint it was not a split at all. Accepting the Spenglerian thesis for the world around him, a historical metaphysic, in other words, Henry Miller, the 'individual artist', could feel exempt because he was the goal (or at least the next step) of this historical process, of man's evolution as such. Although not based on rational-empirical axioms and although it included a certain wariness of progressive and dynamic views of human history, this outlook did not shut out the

dimension of history at all, a fact which does not, of course, preclude an idealistic objective, the aim of reaching some a-historical utopia.

Miller felt that to concentrate exclusively on "the historical battles", which rage nowhere but on the surface, to see life in terms of past and future, growth and progress, was nothing less than a form of "idealism", a denominator common, indeed, to most salvational modes(28). Buddha, St.Augustine, Christ, Mohammed, Lenin, Rousseau, Nietzsche and Freud, even these "heroes" in the (changing) eyes of Henry Miller, were mistaken: "There is a false attitude towards the future, shared by pessimists and optimists alike, in which an absolute, the new or different is posited"(Hamlet 290). By offering salvation in some future condition, these "exemplars" (though themselves living wholly in the present), actually relinquished, in Miller's view, genuine possibilities of self-knowledge and self-responsibility for others. As he put it in "The Enormous Womb" in the fourth Booster: "Somehow Heaven is always in the offing, always around the corner" (B.iv.24). This was not the way.

Agreeing with Céline, who felt that mankind was ruled by a death instinct, "in the grip of a sadist-masochistic obsession"(Hamlet 207), Miller felt man the social animal would never get anywhere near what he called "real life". Fully responsible for the "state of confusion, of distress, of disagreement" in the world, a result of his unwillingness to accept individual responsibility (Hamlet 337), the unfulfilled mass-man would pass away, disappear in a chaos, brutal portents of which Miller conjured up in his depictions of New York City, its insanely mechanistic twitchings and hallucinatory atmosphere. In excerpts from Black Spring and Capricorn, printed in the second and third Booster, as well as in the Dismemberment Delta, Miller's predictions are illustrated: the end of "the man of the transition period"(WoH.82) was near, a being who was no more (in the Nietzschean metaphor) than a tight rope spanning the abyss between animal and superman, between animal and - individuals like Henry Miller. For the Boosters, in short, Heaven, their Golden Age, was not around the corner.

As in most Heavens (including, of course, the Marxist one), it is at this point that "time" and conflict disappear. The Boosters asserted that for them Paradise was here and now; hence the German critic Thomas Ayck was not wrong when he said that Miller advocated the leap from history (Ayck 14). Nevertheless, what one tends to forget is that this leap is from a historical flow, or rather from the organic rise and decline of cultures as delineated by Oswald Spengler, a movement which therefore must exist as a concept, and, by virtue of the Boosters' double vision, is also acknowledged as a reality.

The native of the Villa Seurat sometimes was, sometimes only approximated, the "highest type of man"(Hamlet 225), one who lived without chronology (or with his own), the hero, the "non-historical" type (Hamlet 335). With Rank, Miller and his friends conceived of this "new man" not as a biological novelty, but rather as a human being, homo sapiens, realised in all its potential, as a man who had "died" spiritually, and was reborn "into the same world and the same conditions, but with a new orientation" (Hamlet 290). One objective common to all the Boosters, including Anais Nin, was a state of integration and wholeness, and these were the "new man's" key properties as well(29). As has been suggested above, for the duration of the creative act the artist was thought to be an example of this realised potential. In this condition he was complete, his "creative eye", as Charles Glicksberg said of Henry Miller, "achieves states of ecstatic vision in which time present is obliterated and the poet is caught up in the artifice of eternity" (Glicksberg 129). The Boosters believed that in the case of the "new man", who was the auto-artistic "highest type", the participation in "the artifice of eternity" actually encompassed his whole life. "We shall have no need for art or religion because we shall be in ourselves a work of art" (WoH.92).

There were times when Miller described this ideal human being as an artless, simple Chinaman, a "fundamental, changeless, rock-bottom man, immortal, unscathed by catastrophes" (Hamlet 90). And Ihab Hassan pointed out: "In 'China' all opposites are reconciled, and the artist sits cross-legged, composing his masterpieces in invisible ink" (IH.53). Miller sometimes admitted to his friends that the "homo Millerianus", as a French reviewer once called him, was not quite the

ideal man yet: "Not quite the rock-bottom man of China, for the ashes have yet to be shaken down" (Hamlet 222). Very often, however, as in the Booster editorials, the congruence was obliquely asserted. The Boosters were artists and the artist (in his art, one should say) was always a non-historical figure, said Miller, "always acting against the time-destiny movement" (Hamlet 82). And in a letter to Fraenkel he quoted Jung on the truly 'modern' man:

> The values and strivings of those past worlds no longer interest him save from the historical standpoint. Thus he has become 'unhistorical' in the deepest sense and has estranged himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of tradition. (Hamlet 110)

The truly modern man, then, the Booster type to whom we referred at the beginning of this chapter, was an antinomian, an anarchist, one who had accepted the world as it was, and realised (with Whitman) "that there is nothing but the present, the eternal here and now, the expanding infinite moment which is here and now"(Hamlet 82). This was the objective hidden behind the Booster's bantering editorial, the "here and now", a timeless, oddly non-dynamic mode of existence, which was simply: "To be"(Hamlet 82). In The Black Book coda which was reprinted in the second Booster this condition was described as : "the durable, the forever, the enormous Now"(30).

"It seems to me not only quite possible, but inevitable," noted Miller in April 1937, "that one day we human beings will live an entirely a-historical life" (Hamlet 266). Not all human beings, he suggested, not the mass of mankind, certainly, but rather only those who had realised themselves, who had braved the leap from history, only those who affirmed the two qualities which were prerequisites for art and life (according to the third Booster editorial) namely "faith, and the ability to laugh"(B.iii.5), those who had taken up the "counterpoint attitude", those artist-heroes who were with "God all the time, boosting his handiwork, assisting him, giving him a hand"(B.i.5), those in other words who had accepted "the world-as-is", and had found that "everything is excellent"(B.i.5) and had shed all "idealisms" and extrinsic value shemes.

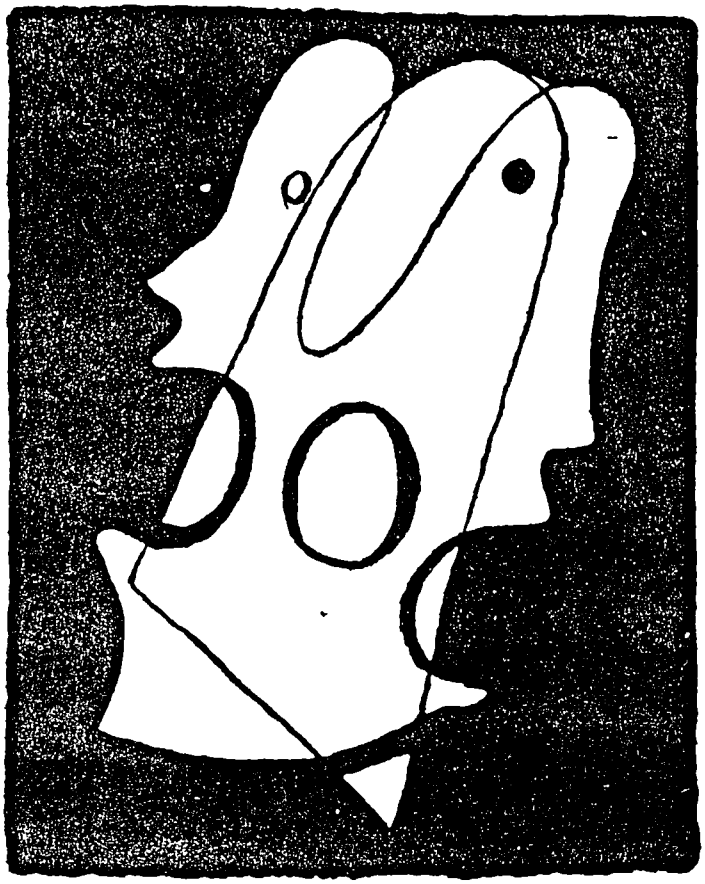
For aspirants to, or inhabitants of, the antinomian Utopia, then, the Booster was not only an ideal watershed in a world crawling with idealistic quacks and little magazine editors who always professed to be "right", not only a spiritual contraceptive against a human race bent on self-destruction, but also also a wonderful demonstration of what 'real life' would be like: "Non-Political, Non-Educational, Non-Progressive, Non Co-operative, Non-Ethical, Non-Literary, Non-Consistent, Non-Contemporary" (Seven.i.back cover).

Notes

1. On the other hand "picayune" is an American word.
2. Hoffman 37,15f.
3. "Every little-magazine editor who is worth his salt knows that he's creating a work of art" (Pollak)(LMA.36).
4. LMObs.327, my translation. Miller also told Thomas Ayck that his phiolosophy was having no philosophy (Ayck 22).
5. CE.i.549. See below: "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster".
6. B.i.5. my italics.
7. BB.157; Key 153.
8. Harrisan 20,24,198; SS30s.202.
9. B.iv.21. See also: AdG.155.
10. See for instance the excerpt from The Black Book in the second Booster.
11. TC.i.3.27,31.
12. We quote from the Booster letter to the New English Weekly which makes more sense than the curious phrasing of the third editorial itself (NEW.xii.4.78f).
13. IE.7; My translation.
14. See Fraenkel in "Active Negation" (T'ien Hsia.viii.4.349).
15. See the discussion of Miller's "The Enormous Womb" in the chapter on "The Air-Conditioned Womb Number".
16. See the chapter on "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster".
17. G.S.Fraser "The Local Rage" (KC.i.2.62).
18. There is much that speaks for Alwyn Lee's pronouncing Miller a totally private person whose rejection of an outside world gone insane has led him into a "Pathology of Isolation" (thus the title of Lee's article (3Dec.67-76).
19. Hamlet 56. This passage incidentally probably inspired Orwell's comparing Miller to someone fiddling while Rome burns but with his face towards the flames (CE.i.570).
20. AN.ii.252,310.
21. AN.ii.252. See also: AN.ii.45,99.
22. Spirit 254. See also: AO.58.
23. AR.40. See also: AN.ii.293.
24. CE.i.596; MFHM.169.

25. Harrison 186,189.
26. Alf Letter, preface to 3rd.ed. np.
27. BCGO.368. See also: Seven.iii.21.
28. B.iv.23f. See also: Hamlet 284.
29. WoH.82; AN.ii.26f. Miller: "Whole men - not fragments as we have around us today"(WAb.49).
30. BB.243. At a highpoint of his spiritual conversion, David Gascoyne noted in his diary: "... now I am". And he added in terms curiously reminiscent of the Boosters: "Everything - inner and outer - is now clear. I have accepted the great fundamental contradiction, and have died of it; and am risen again; and now the old Contradiction is no more"(DG.ii.140).

SEPTEMBER
1937
FIVE FRANCS



THE BOOSTER

IV. The First Villa Seurat Booster, September 1937

Painfully typed out, the circular letters announcing the new Booster were out by the middle of August. Within weeks the first issue appeared. These days of putting together the first number of their new house organ were filled to the brim with varied activities and wonderful encounters; the magazine's final shape, its policies and lay-out were finally decided upon. At the end of a momentous month in Paris Durrell left for London. Among the things he planned to do there was to lobby for his own Black Book as well as for other Villa Seurat productions. His presence was apparently much missed in Paris. When the first number of the new Booster came out he was still busy 'enjoying' literary London, reading and working in the British Museum, hobnobbing at the Café Royal and meeting various luminaries from the world of publishing.

The summer weeks before that journey to England had indeed been unique, judging by the reminiscences and memoirs. They were full of warmth and pertinent work, stimulating and flowing talk, mutual nourishment, laughter, wine and walks along the Seine. There were unforgettable café evenings, nights in cabarets and bars, meetings at the Villa Seurat studio and on Anais Nin's romantic houseboat moored at the Pont Royal. The Durrells' reaction against "the greasy, slippery, putrid world of Montparnasse" (AN.ii.237) was not long in coming, but in general that summer made of Lawrence Durrell a part of Miller's legendary pre-war world. It made him, as Durrell himself said in the preface to David Gascoyne's journal , a part of "intellectual Paris ... which we all inhabited so briefly and with such productive despair" (DG.ii.5). The foundation of a life-long friendship between Miller and Durrell was finally laid in the August of 1937, a 'mythic' period, the ending of which Durrell never ceased to regret, a time which has also been called "the high point of Henry's literary life" (Martin 318).

It was in that summer, too, that an emotionally fragile David Gascoyne had arrived in Paris and moved into an attic room overlooking the cathedral of Notre Dame. He had immediately gone to see Henry Miller whom he had corresponded with previously. Gascoyne began to frequent the Villa Seurat where he also met Lawrence Durrell. Though temperamentally quite dissimilar they became friends. The ex-surrealist Gascoyne was one of the first people to see The Black Book, which he read in manuscript. Gascoyne, who has been incorrectly described as "briefly poetry editor of The Booster" (Corr.394), was not as involved in the Villa Seurat magazine as was Durrell. For a time, nevertheless, the world of the Villa Seurat did have "a hold" on him (DG.ii.97), and a number of his poems as well as excerpts from his Blind Man's Buff notebook appeared in the Booster and Delta.

The Durrells travelled to London in early September leaving behind them Miller and his editor comrades bustling with the Booster preparations. Although the circular had announced that the first issue would "not be particularly brilliant or spectacular, just so-so" (IntHML.iv.22), it was clear that the Villa Seurat had done their best to make the magazine as good as possible. This at least is the impression one gets from reading the ensuing exchange of letters between Paris and London. The Booster was going to be what George Wickes later called "the most hilarious of little magazines" (Corr.113), of high quality and belonging altogether to a different category than all the other "tedious" art reviews, high-brow little magazines and all the other publications they had heretofore been forced to appear in. The Booster was going to be different, and especially that crucial maiden issue. With zest and laughter and imagination they had been working on it, reworking it, as it were, composing the "innocent" editorials we have discussed above, writing articles, selecting excerpts, translating items from the French into English and vice versa, preparing the "boosts", discussing a new lay-out, design and ornamentation, choosing drawings and photographs to be reproduced, pondering on finances and distribution and the Booster's future. It was not as if the magazine took up all their time - Miller worked on Capricorn and Durrell's Black Book was in revision - but it did demand much attention and energy, indeed more than its editors had initially reckoned with, though at this early stage the

fun they had, the great expectations, more than made up for their exertions. When Durrell packed his things and left, things, however, changed somewhat, and Perlès and Miller had to bear the brunt of seeing the sheet through the press. Still, in a letter to Durrell in early September, Miller was cheerful enough as he reported the magazine's state of affairs. "I think it's a go" (Corr.115).

Financially the situation and prospects for several issues were not at all unfavourable. "We are getting subscriptions in driblets but from fairly good sources" (Corr.115) , Miller wrote a week before publication. He probably used the stationery the Boosters had specially printed with an impressive letter head and a long list of cities where they allegedly had correspondents (Corr.facs.letter). Betty Ryan, on vacation in the Balkans, managed to sell three subscriptions in Belgrade. She had another six in view, "including Consuelo de St.Exupéry". The Booster's publicity manager David Edgar apparently "landed" the Princess di San Faustino, an American painter who later married Yves Tanguy (AN.ii.290). As Miller observed, "things are going forward"(Corr.115).

The average circulation of a little magazine, according to Felix Pollack, was "between 200 and 1,000" (LMA.39). Jay Martin has reported that the Booster had about five hundred subscribers before the first issue appeared (Martin 328). Perlès spoke of a "few hundred subscribers" (MFHM.173). This was a very high number for any avant-garde magazine - the New Review, for instance, had only 73 subscribers (according to Perlès). The reason why the Booster had so many subscribers was simply that it was not an avant-garde review - when Miller and his friends seized control. If the number of 500 is correct this meant that, calculating with the lowest sums and numbers, namely that subscriptions were for a year only (and not for two years or a lifetime) and that they all came from France (50fr. instead of 75fr.), and taking into account that half of the subscription money had been used up for the American Country Club predecessors (the first Villa Seurat Booster was no.7 of the second volume), the Booster had at its immediate disposal at the very least 12.500 francs, in other words, around $ 400 (not the Boosters' extortionate exchange rate!). Add to this the payment for approximately fourteen pages of advertisement at

a minimum rate of 800 francs a page ($ 26.40), i.e. another 11.000 francs per issue ($ 360) and it is easy to understand Miller's optimism. The subscription money was calculated for a whole year and though it was not difficult to predict that sooner or later the snob-shop advertisers were going to pull out and that that source of income would dry up, the one-year bundle was a good beginning. What the future might bring was of no great concern, though it was clear that the subscription "driblets" the Villa Seurat itself collected would hardly prove sufficient to carry the magazine. Subscriptions, Durrell was to say jokingly in the second Booster, "make for poor, ill-balanced diet" (B.ii.9). He ought to have said that the paucity of reliable subscriptions made for a poor diet...

What were the costs of producing a little magazine? This depended on the quality, of course, the number of pages, of photographic reproductions, etc. Nicholas Moore, who edited a small magazine of Booster proportions called Seven, emphasised that it was "very cheap" to print a magazine in those days (Letter 13th Sept.1982). But what did that mean in figures? The Villa Seurat literature gives no clue to this, but there is an indirect way of calculating the costs. In February 1939, Durrell's friend, the Ceylonese publisher and editor, Tambimuttu launched Poetry London, a review which belonged to a somewhat more luxurious class of magazine than the modest Booster. Still, the price of both magazines was the same in England in 1939. It was one shilling. According to the Booster exchange rate of December 1937 this was 5 francs (according to the official exchange rate it was 7.35 francs). In an appeal which Tambimuttu wrote several years later he noted: "We have printed 2200 copies of this issue of POETRY (London). But this is only half the circulation we should achieve in order to make the magazine self-supporting" (PL.i.6.205). Roughly speaking, the costs for making a magazine like the Booster self-supporting would have amounted to about 220 pounds sterling, or (at the December 1937 rate) about 30.000 francs. In short, when Miller wrote to his friends and possible contributors that for several numbers they were "sur le velours", he was right. If the advertisers were not all too quick to react, with the money from advertisements and the subscription advance the Booster had a good chance of appearing twice, perhaps even three times without having to make its way on the open market.

Mockingly, the editors had made it perfectly clear in the Booster letter that they intended to run the whole show into the ground as quickly as possible; few of those who subscribed to an avant-garde review would actually be surprised if only a handful of numbers were to appear. Little magazines tended to fold up after several issues any way. Of a total of 124 little magazines which appeared in France in the years 1914 to 1939 more than a third did not survive for more than a year (1). Little magazines and their editors were volatile beings, and whether subscribers had any legal right to demand their money back if a magazine failed to appear is questionable. If they did, it caused Miller no discomfort, as he told Durrell not to "worry about the money" (Corr.115). They needed more subscriptions, to be sure, but, as Miller added: "I see now we are getting them, and that we will get more"(ibid.). A note of self-content coloured his epistle. "The Booster will be out by the end of next week - everything quite well done" (ibid.).

Enclosed in Miller's letter was a Booster placard, the capitals ON SALE HERE indicating as its destination the window of some English or American bookshop. On the placard, the magazine and its curious editorial outlook was briefly outlined:

a non-successful, non-political, non-cultural review published in English and French from Paris once a month under the direction of the celebrated literary quartet:

First Violin	Alfred Perlès	
Also First Violin	William Saroyan	
Viola	Lawrence Durrell	
Cello and Traps	Henry Miller	(Corr.116f)

A listing of pros and cons followed this line-up; the editors proclaimed that they were for various things and against others. What might have been a straightforward declaration of the magazine's intent revealed itself as an apparently absurd listing of curiosa. Thus the

editors were for food, pocket battleships, depressions, plagues, Shangri-la, taking the lead, and they were against peace, poison-gas, fair play, hygiene, moderation, rheumatism and arthritis, all -isms, and schizophrenia. On closer inspection still, a number of these strange preferences and dislikes lose their cloak of comic senselessness and reveal meaning, the more one is familiar with the Villa Seurat story, the more sense one can extract.

The reader need not know much about the writing of Miller and his comrades to see that the editors were 'romantics' (Shangri-la), that they had little to do with the political discussion of the time, as expressed in their New Instinctivist rejection of -isms, followed up self-ironically by a blast against rheumatism. Readers of Tropic of Cancer will understand why the Boosters were all in favour of phallic pocket battleships and of food. In fact, Durrell had put his finger on Miller's notorious phagomania some months before; in that important letter which was later published as "Hamlet, Prince of China" in Delta he interpreted it as part of a Jungian "guilt-responsibility" complex (Corr.53). The Booster's partiality for plagues might be explained by referring to the horrible lecture cum demonstration given by Antonin Artaud in April 1933 at the Sorbonne (AN.i.200). Most of Miller's books, but Black Spring in particular, are eloquent of a particular dislike for Teutonic-American cleanliness and 'hygiene', while the editors' opposition to 'peace' once again points not only to the desire to be different and to provoke bourgeois and politically engaged alike, but to the apocalypic streak in much of their writing.

To most of these keywords one could add an explanatory paragraph, quite in the manner in which Wyndham Lewis elucidated his "Blasts" and "Blesses" in the autobiographical Blasting and Bombadiering of 1937. In fact, the Booster placard is slightly reminiscent of the admittedly more intelligent and more poetic blasts and blesses which Lewis had heaped on the heads of the British art world in the months before the First World War began. The Booster editors always expressed a particular loathing for things British - "Fuck the English, eh?" (Corr.116) - and their prejudice finds expression here in their rejection of the notion of "fair play", which might have had some relation to Lewis' scathing remarks about "English Humour".

Once one has discovered that the impression of absurdity was both intentional and misleading there are no constraints for interpreting the more obscure of the fors and againsts. Why were the Boosters against schizophrenia? That autumn they were all reading Nijinsky's diary; enthusiastic discussions followed as well as a letter by Durrell to the great dancer - whose malady had been diagnosed by the nasty men in the white cloaks as schizophrenia. The declaration against schizophrenia then will seem more a statement against psychiatric terminology and practice than anything else, a protest against a world in which there was no room for wonder and visionaries....

Another point situated the editors in the quasi-surrealist tradition. The Boosters were for "taking the lead", were for "diving into the unconscious" as Miller later explained this pun, which described an non-dogmatic form of automatic writing as we have noted in the chapter on the Villa Seurat and surrealism (PR.176). This pro, however, was of such privacy of meaning that it must have been all but obscure for the man looking into the bookshop window....

The placard's listing once again illustrated that melange so typical of the other editorial statements, a complex of double-meanings, obscurities and surprises, of insiders' humour and coded terminology, mild obscenity, the desire to shock the bourgeois and straightforward statements, all of which was stirred vigorously by irony and arrangement. Thus, for instance, the opposition to poison gas, which seems innocent enough, was situated between a rejection of peace and of fair play, consequently partaking of a rather curious ambience. The effect is a certain disorientation of the reader who might chuckle, feel vaguely titivated but will hardly know the melody the Booster quartet would eventually play. In the confusion of ironies, meanings and double entendres an anarchic Booster once again slipped out unnoticed, uncommitted, free...

In September the new Booster had its premiere. "For a new body one needs a new soul", Durrell was to write in the following number: "And this is what we have done to the Booster - given it a new body and soul!"(B.ii.10). He was right, and yet, just as the editors had loudly proclaimed, while perhaps secretly hoping for the contrary, it did not create a cyclone. Nevertheless, the Boosters had reason to be proud of their A5 sized, sand coloured booklet with its new soul and Nancy Durrell's facial configurations decorating the front cover and some rows of Chinese calligraphy on the back. Its fifty monochrome pages were not of a very impressive appearance, it is true, the paper of medium to poor quality, except for a page or two - Brassai's "Chair Prime", for example. But poor though it was, it was their own, humble in comparison with rich and glossy Minotaures, Verves and Vanity Fairs, but nevertheless their own. Despite the Booster placard, one can easily imagine this loud and outspoken review lying quite mutely on a crowded bookshelf beside the many other literary reviews which were outwardly far more appealing. Then again, some of the more influential little magazines of the day, Roger Roughton's Contemporary Poetry and Prose or Grigson's New Verse, for instance, were very successful though they were cloathed no less ascetically than the Boosters. In its best days the circulation of New Verse actually came up to over a thousand, a number the Booster editors can only have dreamed of in their most optimistic moments, and this despite their five hundred Country Club subscribers...

The Booster editors were quite right in concentrating on finding advertisements and subscriptions, especially as their immediate market, the Paris bookshops, was no longer likely to be all too frequented by throngs of Anglo-American readers interested in avant-garde writing. On this open market and competing with other reviews, the slim pamplet hardly stood a chance. In America and in England, the situation was not much different, apparently. Inquiring whether he might have a poem reprinted in Miller's magazine, Dylan Thomas wrote to the editor of Twentieth Century Verse: "I want it to appear in the Booster, which hasn't any English circulation" (DTCL.274). The Booster had no English circulation. That was in March 1938. It was not as if the editors had not attempted to make inroads in the little magazine market across the Channel. Alan Thomas noted:

"I used to try and sell issues of The Booster in my bookshop in Bournemouth, as they came out - without any great success" (Letter 14th Oct.1980). In a later chapter, entitled "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster" I shall try to explain how the magazine was received in England, or rather, why it was largely ignored...

By its own avowal the Booster was "non-successful" and "non-commercial" as well. Sylvia Beach tried to sell the Villa Seurat review, but whether she was more successful than Durrell's old friend Alan Thomas is doubtful. Aside from the handful of bookshops, distribution was largely an amateurish affair. Durrell later recalled how furious Miller was at a man who became insulting when they tried to sell him a copy in a bar (Corr.211). This brought little money, returns just about enough to pay for the next round of drinks. Durrell remembers: "We used to sell subscriptions to the review in cafés and then drink what we had collected" (Alyn 50). The Booster did not create a cyclone and in this sense it remained a little, little magazine, the adjective denoting the limited number of readers more than anything else according to Frederick Hoffman (Hoffman 2f).

Flicking through the magazine, the chance reader, ideally attentive and open, might have noticed a number of things which were unusual for a small magazine. He might have wondered at the great number of commercial advertisers in its pages, and indeed, Hoffman, who, having worked though literally hundreds and even thousands of little magazines, knew what he was saying, called this peculiar cohabitation of commerce and avant-garde "one of the strangest ironies in little magazine history" (Hoffman 337). Stranger even and perhaps more mystifying still was the fact that this review announced itself as "founded by the American Country Club of France". There were four pages of notes addressed to guests and members of the Club - "the great brotherhood of exiles who find the Club one big family, and a home from home". There was also a photograph showing one Master Valentine Yermakov swinging a golf club at the links (2). In the comical tone of the Sportlight column in the second Booster, Durrell/Norden put into words what the chance reader might have thought:

We have a unique literary review which, like some freak of nature, has been miraculously joined up to a social organism such as the American Country Club. (B.ii.10)

The rest of the sheet, however, was of a very different provenance, as a short glance, say, at Miller's "A Boost for Hans Reichel" (B.i.12), shows. This described how, if one gently squeezes the painter "he exudes a sort of cactus milk which is most excellent for nursing horned toads, vipers, tarantulas and Gila monsters"...

The browsing ruminator of Shakespeare and Co. (or one of the other shops in Paris selling the Booster) may have thought that five francs (about 16 cents) was not too much for a fifty page magazine; at least this was a fraction of what a magnificent Verve quarterly cost, 75 francs. A book such as Tropic of Cancer was selling for fifty francs (Spirit 36), so the purchase of such a little magazine was not quite as absurd as all that. It was an alternative as far as the price was concerned. But the Booster did not sell. Miller later recalled that eventually they just gave the copies away for free (Moore 97). As predicted, it proved to be no commercial success. Still, the September maiden issue had permitted itself the luxury of photographs, one drawing reproduced, a whole assortment of different typefaces, and a gratis insert also on glossy paper.

There were some new names on the editorial list, as well as some contributors who had not been mentioned in the Booster letter. To the editorial board were added Tcheou Nien Sin, head of the Oriental Department and author of the calligraphic message on the back cover. This was in fact a loveletter and translated into French in the October Booster. Another newcomer was Brassai, predictably the photography editor. The magazine published his "Chaire Prime" photograph. It also printed an essay by Miller "L'Oeil de Paris", which was a dithyrambic celebration of Brassai written in 1933 and once intended to be a part of Cancer itself (HMGN.147f). Parts of this essay were also published in a Chicago review called Globe (Brassai). Unfortunately, Brassai's editorial engagement was strictly limited and none of the wonderful photographs which were the results of his adventures into the secret nights of Paris ever appeared here. As a matter of

Brassai

fact, Brassai's book on Henry Miller reveals nothing about the magazine which Perlès had not previously reported in his own memoir.

The first Villa Seurat Booster was largely an editorial number in the sense that the vast majority of contributions were by the Paris staff itself. These Parisian editors apart, there was a poem by Emma Swan, as well as a drawing entitled "Study for Dance" by Abraham Rattner. Rattner was best known in the Miller iconography for their mutual journey through America in 1940, one outcome of which was The Air-Conditioned Nightmare. Rattner also produced the magnificent frontispiece for Miller's Scenario. Long before he met Miller, he was already deeply involved in the art of modernism. He had studied at various Parisian art schools in the 1920s, exhibiting at the famous Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendents. In 1927 he became a member of the Minotaure group, collaborating with Picasso and Chagall, Miro and Klee and others. Rattner became acquainted with Miller in the early 1930s and they often went to the cinema together. One evening in Montmartre they hatched the plan to travel through the United States together, the painter and the writer. In critical writings about the Villa Seurat Rattner is seldom mentioned. There is one reference in Anais Nin's diary: "Abe Rattner paints like Rouault" (AN.ii.193). But in the long winded "The Boddhisatva Artist" Miller did pay a tribute to Rattner, who eventually became an associate editor for Delta. Rattner contributed two drawings of moving groups of figures, barely perceptible under an all embracing net of dancing lines.

There were a number of contributions which were to become "regular features" of the new Booster. Aside from the "Club notes", they were the editorial, the back cover as a vehicle for items in exotic tongues and writing, the Sportlight column by Charles Norden (alias Lawrence Durrell), and an assortment of "boosts", one of which, that of Hans Reichel, has already been mentioned.

In fact, Miller's contributions to the first issue were all in the nature of "boosts", even when they did not carry that title. His article on Brassai and the sketch of "Benno, the Wild Man from Borneo" both partake of that flamboyant and hyperbolic portraiture which made up a good part of Miller's oeuvre, a mixture combining what was the

ostensible purpose, a tribute to the individual potrayed, with indirectly commercial aims, furthering the public's interest in a generally unknown artist, aesthetic and philosophical pronouncements with a good deal of self advertisement. Sometimes this mode of portraiture tended towards the comical as for example in "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt", the caricature of Walter Lowenfels. Sometimes it was in the 'surrealistic' vein, that is, full of obscure and usually violent imagery. "Benno, the Wild Man from Borneo" is an example. Sometimes, as another study of the same painter, G.B.Benno, shows - it was issued in the London Bulletin - Miller's portraiture could be remarkably sobre and realistic. Most often, however, his homage operated by taking some mark of his subject and blowing it up to 'mythical' proportions. "L'Oeil de Paris", presented under the pseudonym of Valentin Nieting (Miller's grandfather's name), is a typical instance, Brassai being not only a great photographer, but the living eye, and, to quote no more than the tail of a string of extravagant images, "l'oeil tranquille et omnivisuel du Bouddha, l'oeil qui ne se ferme jamais. L'oeil insatiable" (B.i.22).

At Miller's instigation a four-page letter was reprinted in the Booster. It was written by one Phineas Flapdoodle to the Park Commissioner of New York City, a bundle of advice culminating in the demand for "a great deal more light, more natural light, more air, more beauty and very much more safety to the pedestrians, the general thoroughfares and the general surroundings" (B.i.supplement). In the 1920s Miller had fished this curious epistle out of his employer's waste-basket when he was working temporarily as a gardener. And it apparently played an important role at a crucial junction in his life. His wife had just left him to travel in Europe with his arch-rival, Jean Kronski, his heart was breaking when he chanced upon this missive: "it was this letter, ridiculous and pathetic in its way which saved me from eating my heart out", Miller was to write in Nexus, quoting much of this "arborico-solipsistic harangue" in that work (Nexus 168). A feeling of peace overcame him as he read it:

It was as if some of that light - that 'more natural light' - had invaded my being. I was no longer enveloped in a fog of despair. There was more air, more light, more beauty to my surroundings: my inner surroundings. (Nexus 169f)

Later, the letter became for him an exotic tonic for all kinds of ailments, including that super-abundance of language both he and Durrell were painfully prone to. One of Miller's very few suggestions to Durrell about The Black Book was this: "So, mind you, I don't say rewrite the book - simply prune and trim, as the guy says in his letter to the Park Commissioner. 'More light, more air, more natural light...'" (Corr.93).

Alfred Perlès' contribution to his own magazine was a fragment from his novel Le Quatuor en Ré-Majeur, which reveals delicate descriptions of his Paris surroundings as well as a melancholic introversive streak. Both these aspects contrast strongly with Miller's "torrential writing and tropical furies" as Anain Nin once observed (AN.i.75). Le Quatuor is, in fact, a fascinating counterpart to Miller's Paris books and stories, illuminating, along with Sentiments Limitrophes (both recently reprinted) the life of the circle of friends around Miller and Perlès from a different and fresh angle of vision. The fourth Booster and the Christmas Delta of 1938 printed two more excerpts from the book. I will return to the book there. At the moment it may suffice to quote a blurb by Miller for an advertisement:

Intensely subjective the book nevertheless reaches out into a universal realm which has the quality of light. There are passages of such revelatory character as to produce the same impression of ecstasy which music at its best gives us. (B.iv.25)

Under his real name Lawrence Durrell contributed a poem to the first Booster. "A Lyric for Nikh" was part of "Themes Heraldic", a cycle which he composed in Corfu. The third of nine poems, it gave an indication of Durrell's interest in the world of symbols and mythological images and was eloquent of his belief that sexual love was a means of cogitation, of experiencing that "mystical" realm, which he called the "Heraldic Universe". Like "The Sonnet of Hamlet", a fourteen stanza poem which was issued in the last number of Delta and will be discussed in detail, "A Lyric for Nikh" reveals the distance

which separated Durrell from orthodox surrealism, as it is plain that the poet consciously selected and arranged his material, drew on traditional imagery, and created not only a structural pattern - the similarly composed first and third stanza are draped around the middle one - but also one of sound with echoes and repetition...

Anais Nin's "Le Merle Blanc" was inspired by a visit to a psychiatric ward on the Ile St.Louis with her friend Jean Carteret in March 1937. We have referred to this account before. It is an almost literal version of an entry into her diary, a transcription which may be said to shed some light on the principles of her art. Much as her objective was to record truthfully, photographically even, it needs no great effort to see that this objective was unachievable. Her primary perception of the event was naturally biased. This was the first distortion. The second distortion, a more aesthetic filtering, was her remembering the event as she recorded it in her diary. A further removal from the event as such was the transcription into a short story "Le Merle Blanc". And one might also add that her later reworking and rewriting of the diary before its publication may have represented yet another step away from 'photographic' reportage. Add to this the fact that, as we have seen above, in 1941 "Le Merle Blanc" became the second part of her portrait of Antonin Artaud "Je Suis le plus malade des surréalistes"(AN.iii.184). In her opinion, of course, these filterings were no more than a peeling out of an essence, a moving closer to the heart of the matter rather than a leading away. Whether this is true or not is not easy to say. What one can say, however, is that this touching depiction of a madman's plight invoked clearly many of the Villa Seurat's romantic preconceptions. "Would human beings ever learn the meaning of symbolism?" Anais Nin asked in her diary. And she added: "Poets and dreamers and madmen, using a language which was clear clear clear"(AN.ii.191). The language of the madman, as lonely as the white sparrow of Alfred de Musset's Histoire d'un Merle Blanc, was indeed very clear. It was so clear that Anais Nin's open authorial intrusion in "Le Merle Blanc" in the final sentence seems somewhat unnecessary: "Cela se passa un peu comme le chemin de la croix"(B.i.18).

Like "Le Merle Blanc" the contributions of Durrell and Miller and Perlès served well as introductions to Villa Seurat concerns and attitudes, giving a certain amount of meaning and literary substance to the outlines provided by the Booster letter and Miller's first editorial. In fact, even before coming to the editorial the reader of the Booster was alerted to the review's comical tone: the title page glibly put on offer editorial chairs for the sum of 500 francs for "those who are determined to break into print". This announcement, situated discreetly beside the table of contents, was yet another knot of irony and straightforwardness so typical of the Booster. If taken at face value, it was a simple business proposition: an opportunity was provided for people who felt their work ought to be published, but who had hitherto had no chance. Rumour had it that some actually chose this Booster pathway into the world of little magazine publishing. Nicholas Moore has written:

> I don't know about The Booster, but I do believe I too heard that story at the time of certain people paying to have their contributions in it. But I can't remember who they were, if I ever knew. (Letter 13th Sept.1982)

Miller later teasingly observed: "We even included poets and poetesses then unknown, if they paid us"(Moore 97). As a matter of fact, the Booster was not unique in this respect, it seems, and Nicholas Moore remembered one publisher, Caton of the Fortune Press, who issued both "respectable pornography" and the work of young poets. "I believe some of them paid him ten pounds or so - maybe more in some cases - for him to publish him"(Letter 13th Sept.1982). As a business idea such schemes were simple. In the art world, however, other conventions tend to dominate, at least outwardly, and these were at cross purposes with schemes such as the Booster's and Caton's. It is the convention that success (and being published was a form of success) ought to be based on merit and not on the power of the purse. The Booster's comically arrogant tone - "For those who are determined ..." - reflected this belief as did Nicholas Moore's avowal that he himself had not payed Caton:

I never paid him for publishing me. But I know some did. In fact I used to get my 10 off him. I don't know if I did for my first one. I may have got nothing, but I certainly didn't pay him, though I believe he tried to get me to. (Letter 13th Sept.1982)

It was considered contrary to the artist's work ethic to pay for something - which he dearly desired. The Boosters, who had brought out a number of works privately, may well have felt that there was nothing wrong with paying to be printed. But their announcement, public and not secretive and not negotiated behind the padded doors of some publisher's office, was a provocation, a questioning of an artistic taboo. Miller had written about Tropic of Cancer (published with Anais Nin's money) that it was "a gob of spit in the face of Art"(Cancer 10). The Booster's offer of editorial chairs was also a spit in the face of Art, Art's business face, that is. And yet, as the tone of the notice showed, the feelings of Miller and friends were not really as unambiguous as all that... As a matter of fact, the Boosters may well not have cared all too much either way. It was simply fun to be different, to provoke and to shock. There was no real satiric purpose to this offer, no overt desire to uncover hypocrisy or false pretense, for such moral terms had little weight for the Booster triumvirate. If questioned at gunpoint the only sin they genuinely acknowledged was to be disloyal to oneself. Neither selling not buying editorial chairs necessarily implied that one diverged from one's inner itinerary, though naturally both acts would seem to the public to indicate a lack of integrity - which the Boosters were aware of. But they did not bother too much about public opinion, on the contrary with nonchalance they waved the banner on which was written that they lacked all moral fibre and principle. Once again a knot of ironies and half-tones was left in the reader's hand which cannot be finally untangled ...

Notes

1. These figures are taken from Richard Admussen' Les Petites Revues Littéraires 1914-1939.
2. Mille's middle name was Valentine (B.i.30,33).

V. The October Booster

In the late summer the turbulent world of literary London had all but swallowed Lawrence Durrell. Contact with the Villa Seurat was minimal. One of the few letters to arrive in Paris described Durrell lobbying for his work and that of his new Villa Seurat friends, collecting Booster subscriptions as he went along. "Orwell promised one", he wrote to Miller (Corr.117). Among the many people he met were the famous sexologist Havelock Ellis and the directors of Faber and Faber. Eliot, thus Durrell, was "a very charming person, believe it or not"(Corr.118). With Faber he discussed not only The Black Book but also the possibility of fighting a test case over Tropic of Cancer in England. In the course of these talks the Villa Seurat review was also mentioned and Durrell wrote to Paris: "Eliot offers me his help". Expectations in London were apparently very high: "Everyone keen on The Booster here"(Corr.118). This letter closed on a note of joy and optimism: "Hurrah! We are opening fire now on different fronts. Boom, Boom! Great puffs of prose. The battle is on"(Corr.118).

One of the pieces of artillery was the Booster, and Durrell busied himself collecting assorted materials for future numbers. These included an article by the notorious reactionary poet Potocki of Montalk, who was also the editor of the Right Review. This item, an essay "proving that Bach was a Potocki" (Corr.117) had been referred to by Potocki in an essay in the Right Review of February 1937. For the Booster Durrell also collected some poems in Swahili, in Zulu, Armeniam and Greek, as well as one in Urdu. Only the latter by the Indian author Mulk Raj Anand and the Greek verse by Kostes Palamas eventually appeared in the Villa Seurat organ.

Lawrence Durrell returned to Paris before the second Booster was out. This was probably around the middle of September. He had mentioned in his letter to Miller that he would arrive in Paris "next- Friday". He also referred to the "impertinent" note sent to him recently by George Bernard Shaw on the subject of Miller and pornography which was dated September 9th 1937 (Entretiens.facs.). Spirits were high in Paris and even the American Country Club was not too displeased with the

Booster's curious metamorphosis. But then the first new Booster was, in the words of Perlès, a "comparatively mild number, a sort of trial balloon, that contained nothing equivocal, no obscene ravings" (MFHM.169). In detail (possibly fictional) Perlès recalled how Elmer Prather congratulated the new editors, and, "not devoid of a certain sense of humour got a few chuckles out of our roguery" (MFHM.170). Without having understood everything, he was nevertheless certain that the editorials reflected sentiments which were both immoral and anarchic and he solemnly warned the editor-in-chief not to continue along these lines: "No immorality, if you please. It was safer to be moral and howl with the wolves. He told me so when I met him and didn't blush while saying it"(MFHM.170). President Prather had plainly not understood: although they enjoyed producing their magazine the circle of friends from the 14th arrondisement had no intention of keeping it for all too long (or so they always said), and Elmer's cautionary advice to pussyfoot along must have seemed to the new New Instinctivists a warning - what they must never do. It was a direct provocation and their direction, "anarchism" and "immorality", was wonderfully confirmed. "The battle is on" - as Durrell had written from London (Corr.118).

The second issue of the Booster was in preparation, but work on other projects continued. Miller's Scenario was published with the frontispiece by Rattner (AN.ii.244f). Apart from her work for the Spanish Republican Paix et Démocratie, Anais Nin was busy rewriting her diary, finishing the portrait of Otto Rank and writing in Winter of Artifice. The early volumes of her diary, written when she was a child, were submitted to the Nouvelle Revue Française publisher, Gallimard, and a whole page advertisement in the second and the third Booster read:

HERNRY MILLER HAS THE HONOR OF ANNOUNCING TO THE WORLD THE PUBLICATION IN JANUARY, 1938, OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF ANAIS NIN'S GREAT DIARY OF WHICH THERE ARE NOW 50 VOLUMES EXISTENT. (B.2.inside front cover)

A similar advertisement was later printed in the Phoenix of Woodstock, N.Y. (Phoenix.ii.1). But although Miller searched around for subscribers - André Maurois was one (AN.ii.270) - the response was so

poor that the journal did not appear (Ford 370). It was only published many decades later. In spite of this sign of friendship, relations between Miller and Anais Nin were not free of complications, the latter being critical of Miller's work on Capricorn, of what she called his forays into "the great anonymous, depersonalized world of sex"(AN.ii.260). Durrell and Anais Nin, however, got along splendidly; the Durrells were now installed in a flat of their own overlooking the attractive Parc de Montsouris. Here, too, the Villa Seurat cronies sometimes met. And for about two months Nancy and Lawrence Durrell kept open house for David Gascoyne, whose diet tended to be rather poor. On the 18th of October Gascoyne wrote to Durrell congratulating him on The Black Book (DG.ii.22). He also gave Durrell parts of the journal he had been keeping. Durrell read them and wrote a cutting poem entitled "Journal" which appeared in the New English Weekly a few days after war was declared in September 1939 (NEW.xv.21.268). Gascoyne in turn responded with a poem entitled "The Other Larry" which was reprinted in his Collected Poems. It was in these days that Gascoyne completed Hölderlin's Madness, having freed himself of a blockage which had kept him from writing for some months. In this collection his move away from surrealist principles of composition was apparent (DG.ii.22). At any rate, Gascoyne and Durrell were frequently together now, as the latter once wrote to Richard Aldington, spending "long nights punishing the bottle and jeering at one another" (RALD.30f). For Gascoyne this was "the beginning of a period of excitement and activity"(DG.ii.32), partly a result of his new friendsips with the Durrells, Anais Nin, Audrey Beecham and others. For once, Gascoyne who celebrated his 21st birthday at W.H.Smith's in the rue Rivot on the tenth of October, "seemed to be quite happy" (DG.ii.33). The Villa Seurat activity was contagious, and all the while the second Booster had been ripening.

It resembled the maiden issue. Produced under the flag of the same editorial staff, its format still the same and fifty pages long, including the Booster insert No.2, the general organisation of content had not been altered. Right in the middle were the obligatory Club notes, two dozen notices the tone and almost surrealistic absurdity of which might be suggested by the following example: "Miss M.G.Priestly of London is spending a month with Mrs.E.R.Robinson doing a lot of

golf, taking in the Exposition and enjoying bridge and teas"(B.ii.32). Banality strutting about self-importantly was rendered incongruous by the avant-garde surroundings, so that one might well speak of their approximating an art form, vaguely reminiscent perhaps of Duchamps' Ready-Mades...

Like the first Booster the October number opened with the editorial, which in this case tried to explain what "booster" meant in French. It was Alfred Perlès' editorial contribution. Some pages on was Charles Norden's second (and, unfortunately, final) "Sportlight". It surprised the reader with "a new indoor game, invented by the Fashion editor, which is known as Boosting" (B.ii.9). A variant of the Miller and Perlès begging letter, the idea was to write to some commercial company or business and to persuade the people responsible to place advertisements in the Booster. Two such letters, of the sort "continually leaving our editorial department" were appended, "the kind of thing that only the experienced Booster can do", and they were not only very funny, but also quite authentic. Perlès remembered:

> We would send out extremely eccentric letters to managers of firms in the habit of advertising their products on a large scale, in the hope that one or the other would fall for our candid and not unhumorous epistles and pay for an ad in The Booster. The result was nil. (MFHM.172)

This was not really surprising and probably did not surprise the Boosters either. To a shipping line, for example, they wrote:

> The Yellow Belly Line is not going to hit the rocks because it fails to advertise in the new Booster. Not at all. On the contrary, it is more likely that **we** will hit the rocks if we don't get your full page ad. (B.ii.10)

They also sent a splendid letter to the manufacturers of the Kestos Dual Purpose Brassieres. Kestos, a well-known company in its day, had advertised on the back cover of the chique London weekly Night and Day, the fact that "more women change to Kestos" because of its "unique features - the gentle persuasive uplift, the subtle crossway pull" (ND.i.10.back cover), illustrating this with a Vargas like portrait of a beautiful semi nude of the Marlene Dietrich type. The

experienced Boosters wrote:

What particularly impresses us about your product is that it is always winning friends, as you say. No doubt it is the gentle, persuasive uplift, the subtle crossway pull, as you call it. We too, cher monsieur et madam, are against modern warfare, the explosive shrapnel, the submarine, the aerial bombardment of unfortified cities, the murder and assassination of women and children and men without uniforms. We are absolutely against self-destruction, no matter what form it assumes. (B.ii.12)

They continued in this manner, indicating that they would even translate Kestos advertisements into French, German, Russian, Urdu, Swahili, Armenian, Kurd and "inter-allied tongues", and that they would put the ad on the back cover, usually devoted to "foreign language contributions". Announcing an issue of the Booster "which will be devoted entirely to the Womb" they glibly suggested "putting the Kestos Brassiere beneath Anais Nin's Womb" (ibid.). The letter's peroration was a magnificent:

And remember: You brace the Bust-
We boost it !!! (B.ii.13)

The Booster's disregard for the exigencies of a grey business practice was not very original, but it was funny, perhaps the most comical aspect of the entire Villa Seurat magazine. When Durrell asked who could help but reply enthusiastically to these wonderful boosting letters, one can only agree with the answer he himself offered:

No one but the business dullards who have spent so long reading their blotched and wretched commercial copy-books that they are unfit to read anything else. In fact no one, if one must be polite. (B.ii.11)

Reminiscent of these "boosting" letters, of Alfred Perlès' letter to the Sels Cretchen Company in Sentiments Limitrophes, and of the pseudo- authoritative Money and How it Gets that Way was an article by Henry Miller on "Fall and Winter Fashions (For Men Only)". It was a travesty of a fashion report:

Since the revolution in China the Chinese have so taken to the European hat, notably the fedors and the panama, that white men are beginning to be dubious of the propriety of a hat. (B.ii.46)

And the "boost" which he had promised to a tailoring company was comically turned into its very opposite:

We had promised to say a word or two about the Aberdeen Tailors, of which Mr.Riddle is the owner and director since 1919, when we with great difficulty persuaded Mr.Riddle to renew his advertising contract with us last month. (B.ii.43)

Miller signed this article "Earl of Selvage", a title bestowed on him by Lawrence Durrell's friend, the poet John Gawsworth. A friend of Gawsworth, M.P.Shiel had inherited the title of King of Redonda from his father who had many years before seized a Caribbean island and reigned there until the British government deposed him. Before Shiel the younger, who never gave up his inheritances, died, he made Gawsworth King of Redonda. Gawsworth (a contributor to Delta, incidentally) in turn began creating dukes and princes to help him in his struggle against "this wicked injustice"(Spirit 22). Among the nobility of the lost realm were Miller and Durrell (Duke of Cervantes Pequena), Richard Aldington, Oswell Blakeston and, somewhat incongruously, Victor Gollancz of the Left Book Club...

Miller's "A Boost for the Black Book" was the genuine article, an enthusiastic, hyperbolic, and explosive display of Villa Seurat concerns and terminology, an example of the praise the Boosters heaped on one another so generously. There was Durrell "poised like a bird between the wildest opposites" and there was that "germ of a new climate which will in turn create a new soil". There was that penchant for a distant Shangri-la, in this case, for Tibet, a "land in which magic and mystery dominate" and the concomitant "I am against the English with all my heart". The preoccupation with the "womb", with the "birth trauma" and with the artists' attempts to transcend this restriction, to adapt and to rework "the extra-uterine world" as Rank had said (ORTB.44f), was (once again) voiced when Miller wrote: "This book is for those who have staked out a new womb in which to continue the creative life" (B.ii.18). Although the uninitiated will have had

great difficulties in comprehending the Villa Seurat idiom - what was "the new heraldic realm" and what was "Nijinsky's sane God-reality"? - the intensity of the "boost" may possibly have tempted the reader to sample from the closing pages of The Black Book itself, which followed.

Bordered in black like a funeral notice, this "coda" was dedicated to Nancy Durrell. It is a difficult piece but a good example of the young man's fiercely poetic and very dense prose. Occasional phrases indicate vaguely the direction of his deeper concerns: "Art must no longer exist to depict man but to invoke God" (B.ii.22). Perhaps one of the crucial sentences in Durrell's entire book, this programmatic statement was eloquent of his impatience with the decade's poetry of 'objective' social observation. We have discussed 'God', that hub of Villa Seurat aesthetics above, the metaphor (at times) for the elusive absolute of selfhood, which Durrell and Miller somehow believed in and which was alluded to throughout the Booster and Delta. Before turning to another example, Miller's "I am a Wild Park", which followed some pages after Durrell's excerpt, it cannot be left unmentioned that the editors "prepared" for Anglo-American publication this extract from The Black Book. They eliminated all obscene words. They replaced the original "cunt" with a clinically sterile "vulva" and completely obliterated a voracious "Connie swallowing the penis in a series of thirsty gulps"(1). George Bernard Shaw had said that Miller should "bowdlerize himself and not be a damned fool" (Entriens.facs). Durrell had found this note "impertinent" - but he still followed the old man's advice, at least in the pages of the Booster. The Boosters, as we have had occasion to note, were being less ironic than their reputation and the appearance and tone of the circular would have suggested when they announced that nothing obscene would be printed.

Miller's "I am a Wild Park", an excerpt from Tropic of Capricorn, familiarly denounced the City, New York City, that cold symbol of everything that he loathed, its meaningless sterility, materialism, mechanical sex and vacuity. Opposed to this was the protagonist's apprehesion of an unexplored region somehwere beyond, an illogical and free area of the dream. Both aspects were still a part of the protagonist's life (Henry Miller of the pre-Parisian years), but he was

already determined "to die as a city in order to become again a man" (B.ii.40). A "spiritual rebirth" was needed, the great "change of heart", which was the point of departure of existential trajectory envisaged by Miller and Durrell, one which led to becoming a "man", and from there to the "artist" and on to becoming "God" (Corr.53). There will be more to say about this later. In the "I am a Wild Park" fragment, however, Miller may be said to have envisaged some intermediary stage along the way, a spiritual "Boddhisatva" condition (see the essay on Rattner) existing somewhere this side of selfhood:

> Before I shall have become quite a man again I shall probably exist as a park, a sort of natural park in which people come to rest ...I shall be the wild park in the midst of the nightmare of perfection, the still unshakeable dream in the midst of frenzied activity, the random shot at the white pillar of logic. (B.ii.41)

Many stones of the mosaic which was Miller's impressionistic view of the world can be reviewed in the "Wild Park" excerpt, his tendency to the quietist virtues of detachment, silence, acceptance and meditation, his penchant to the irrational, the dream, a "super-infantile realm", which might be illogical and even insane, as he told Anais Nin, but not as "crazy and chaotic as the world around me"(AN.ii.120).

There was an illuminating story connected with this excerpt from Capricorn. The Hungarian painter Louis Tihanyi walked into Miller's studio one day, as the American wrote to Durrell many years later, and he

> tells me in his cluck-cluck language (which he always supposed we understood, but no one did, not even his Hungarian friends) that I should go right on writing, he would talk to me as I wrote. (Corr.385)

Miller worked wonderfully - on "The Wild Park" - and later accepted Tihanyi's invitation to dinner, but when he "go there that evening he was lying beside the telephone, dead" (ibid.). As Brassai pointed out in his book on Miller, this was a typical instance of the American's immense propensity for dramatic distortion: Tihanyi did not possess a telephone. Tihanyi was understood by his friends (even by Miller as

the letter unwittingly shows). Tihanyi died of meningitis in the Cochin hospital (HMGN.158).

Miller had come to regard himself as a "Wild Park", a refuge for haunted souls. In order to illustrate this, he contributed to the Booster a moving letter by one Mohamed Ali Sarwat, a messenger of the Western United Telegraph Company where Miller was personnel director. This was the Booster's second insert. Full of despair and awkwardly poetic passages, the Egyptian student describes how he watched with horror as his dream of America shattered in myriads of disappointments, how the only ray of hope in his darkness was Henry Miller. "I have in you, the true man". The true man was Henry Miller, the Wild Park! Just as Flapdoodle's epistle was used in Nexus, the letter from Egypt was later reprinted in Miller's Big Sur book (BSOHB.230f).

Alfred Perlès' translation into French of Tcheou's missive to Betty was a delicate love-poem. His "Autour de la Missive à Betty", however, was no success. With awkward jocularity Perlès strained the contrived notion that some readers had suspected the Booster of being agents of the Japanese High Command. He superfluously re-emphasised "la pureté essentiellement non politique du Booster" (B.ii.16), and did not succeed in establishing a real link between his introduction and the love-letter. Tcheou's letter was probably addressed to Betty Ryan, for in his Miller biography Perlès described her "soft and mysteriously caressing voice, borrowed from the folklore of some forgotten country"(MFHM.141), a phrase borrowed in turn from the Chinese student's "Missive"....

In an editorial post-script the Boosters were hyperbolically enthusiastic about the advent of another contributor, an author of world-fame: "This month another gun has opened fire on the Booster front; Saroyan, of divine thunder, light-bringer, dart-slinger, the man with the insane pulse"(B.ii.6). Saroyan's "The Man with the Heart in the Highlands" - taken from the 1936 Three Times Three and later expanded into a successful play - was eagerly squeezed into the October Booster. It was a short story which revealed all the qualities and defects which critics found in his work: on the one side his deep familiarity with the language and the customs of the social types he

described, on the other an all-too easy optimism, sentimentality and obtrusive "good-time gospel"(AL.96), a facility not very different, by the way, from much of Miller's own post-war work (e.g. Book of Friends). In this story Saroyan did not actually conceal poverty and hunger, but it was indicative of the sentimental undertow that there was nothing sinister or frightening about it, about Johnny and his father and his grandmother living on bird-seed! G.S.Fraser has observed that for Saroyan evil itself was good as it brought one "in touch with the more fundamental reality" (Seven.v.35). This conviction actually anaethesises and prejudices all deeper conflicts, conflicts and contradictions which - in their best writings and despite their 'acceptance' doctrine - Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller left unresolved, extracting from them much of their vehemence and vitality. There was no horror in Saroyan, no violence of bitterness and caricature, and although he was one of the foremost writers of the Depression period his star was already beginning to fade. In 1935 Edmund Wilson wrote in "The Literary Worker's Polonius":

> The unfortunate Mr.Saroyan has been put through the circle in record time. He was first discovered by the editors of Story and acquired a reputation among its readers. Then when his book was published, he got some prompt enthusiastic reviews. But he had now been triumphantly brought out, and after this there was nothing left for the reviewers of his books but to try to make him ashamed of himself. (SoL.606)

But in the Booster years he was still considered a celebrity and comparisons with Henry Miller - "Both are conversational. Both flow in a perpetual stream. Both..." (NMHM.25f) - were usually aimed at letting Miller participate in Saroyan's reputation, not vice versa. Nicholas Moore, incidentally, felt that Miller was much closer to Saroyan than to Durrell or Perlès, their common and peculiarly American goal being the "WHOLE MAN" and practising sainthood. (NMHM.25f). Saroyan's contribution to the Booster was subseqently translated by Raymond Queneau for the April 1938 issue of Mésures. Many years later Durrell was to express his impatience with Saroyan to Miller, with

the breathless lisp of a sweet little boy who is granted all the wonderful, wonderful treasures of God's own landscape. It is fundamentally pretentious - sentimental, and goes along with being tough as hell and hep and yet 'so quiet, saintly and Christlike, just another bum like Krishna was'. (Corr.348)

Another prominent contributor to the October Booster has already been mentioned. The Indian Mulk Raj Anand had given Durrell an Urdu poem entitled "Nightmare". But what was Anand doing in a sheet like the Booster? He had studied philosophy in Cambridge and London; he had written about Persian and Indian art, but he was a political writer. His first novel, The Untouchable, which dealt with the social question in India, was turned down 18 times by publishers until E.M.Forster read it. Forster wrote the preface. It became a great success. The writings of Anand were one aspect of his political engagement against British rule in India. He took part in the International Intellectuals Conference in London in 1936. That same year had seen the publication of The Coolie, which, as Life and Letters pointed out in a blurb of spring 1937, "has been published in the U.S.S.R., where it is having those Russian sales which make an English best-seller look like a remainder" (LLT.xvi.7.xi). Anand also worked in Spain for the Republicans in 1937 and there became a close friend of George Orwell. He returned to India to work with Nehru in 1939, founded the Progressive Writers' Movement there, but came back to England in the summer of 1939 to broadcast with George Orwell on the Indian Section of the BBC during the war. He was, in short, anything but the exemplary contributor to the magazine of Miller and Lawrence Durrell.

In early 1939 Durrell was to write a letter of praise to one of Anand's intimate enemies, the Polish Potocki of Montalk. Published alongside that letter -"Power to your long right arm!" said Durrell (RR viii.np) - was a brilliantly vituperative harangue against "Muk Rake Anand", a chapter from Potocki's Social Climbers in Bloomsbury:

Anand had just published an autobiographical novel about dung. I told him that if this book gave a true picture of the Indians, then the only hope of Hindustan was for the English to stay there and govern for ever. (RR.viii.np)

But though Potocki's scornful blows against Anand's literary qualities -"long-winded, involved, vague, sentimental burbling of Babu English" and "interminable gaseous stuff"- do little justice to the Indian's work, his qualities as a novelist are generally not rated very high either, and William Walsh called him "a writer whose work has to be severely sieved"(Cont.Nov.49). Nevertheless, even in the Booster days his reputation was in the ascent, and he is now widely considered one of the better of 20th century Indian novelists (WA.i.52). For a while, at any rate, Miller and Durrell apparently kept in touch with Anand, "our mutual firebrand Hindu-Communist friend", as Miller called him (Corr.345).

In the chapter on "Preludes to the Booster" we referred to the Booster Broadsides. Now, in the October number the first ten of these eccentrically titled pamphlets were announced. They were to cost 50 cents a piece. The titles were: Mental Climate (Lowenfels), 29 Points on the Weather (Fraenkel), Unique Eunuch (The Englishman at Home) (Durrell), Asylum in the Snow (Durrell), Provincial Jeremiad (Durrell), The New Instinctivism (Miller and Perlès), Money and how it gets that Way (Miller), An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere (Miller), Letter to the Kruschen Salt Company (Perlès), En Marge des Sentiments Limitrophes (Perlès). Advertisements for these Broadsides appeared in a number of other little magazines like the Phoenix and Seven, and continued to do so even when the Villa Seurat sheet was renamed Delta. In time some of the initial titles and authors dropped away and some new ones appeared: Asylum and Zero (Durrell), Incognito in Amnesia (Osborn), The Fauna and Flora of the World (G.Durrell), The Neurotic at Home and Abroad (Edgar), Halitosis of the Soul (Durrell), What Makes Me So Saroyan (Saroyan), The Pluto-Neptune Conjunction ("Azimuth"). Many of the above items never saw publication, but as parts of novels or other collections a number did. Only one, however, Miller's Money, was printed as a Booster Broadside. Folded in a black cover with gold lettering, it was dedicated to Ezra Pound... In the sense that only one of twenty proposed titles were actually issued, this cannonade was a flop. From a differnt angle, however, one might argue that the prospect of pamphlet publication stimulated and encouraged and increased the sense of cohesion of the Miller circle in a time of increasing outer pressure, a horizon ever darkening with

clouds of war.

Notes

1. Compare BB.240/B.ii.21 and BB.243/B.ii.22.

VI. The Tri-Lingual Womb Booster, November 1937.

With the second Booster the walls holding the shaky edifice began to crumble. Full of righteous indignation and fury the American Country Club withdrew its "moral support" and threatened to take the editors to court. "The Booster became so good", Durrell later recalled (somewhat inaccurately), "that within three numbers it had not only lost all its advertising but had provoked the President of the Club to threaten us with legal action under French laws of obscenity" (Encounter.ix.51.56). The object of scorn and censure was "Nukarpiartekak", an Eskimo legend which the October Booster had reprinted. In his memoirs Alfred Perlès conveys the impression that Durrell had himself discovered this short tale in an 1884 anthology by Holm. But in truth, there was not that much unearthing to do: an acquaintance of David Gascoyne, A.L.Lloyd (who later became a famous authority on folk-music) had translated "Nukarpiartekak" for the July 1936 number of Contemporary Poetry and Prose. At any rate, this Greenland tale, which might have served Otto Rank as a wonderful illustration for his birthtrauma theories, immediately appealed to the Villa Seurat as it was full of strangeness and poetry and passion: Nukarpiartekak, the old bachelor, burning with desire for a beautiful girl, is finally at his beloved's side, begins to make love to her, feels

> as if he thrust himself in her up to the knees, then up to the arms, then to the armpits, and his right arm was thrust within her, and then the man, up, to the chin, was thrust inside her. And at last he gave a great shout and vanished in her completely. (B.ii.7)

The next morning, according to the legend, the girl stepped out of the igloo to urinate and "with her, the skeleton of Nukarpiartekak came out" (ibid.). This was too much for the delicate sensibilities of the clubswinging and bridgeplaying members of the Club. There was an uproar, as Perlès recalled, which caught the Villa Seurat quite unprepared: "We had no reason to believe that any adult reader could be shocked by the innocent little prose poem"(MFHM.171). Mr.Prather and associates, however, condemned the tale as "repugnantly filthy and pornographic", and forbade the use of their good name (i.e. the Booster) for any future issue. "In view of its disapproval of the

present editorial policy of The Booster", read the announcement in the third issue of the Villa Seurat magazine,

> The American Country Club of France wishes to announce its complete dissociation with the journal, and to state that the Club desires to be held blameless for any articles that have appeared or may appear in the columns of The Booster beginning with the September 1937 issue. (B.iii.7)

With the second Booster, then, the tenuous symbiosis between the Club and the Villa Seurat came to an end. That "freak of nature", which Durrell had likened their singular review to previously (B.ii.10), was however still called the Booster for two numbers which followed the Eskimo scandal. The memory of Perlès failed him when he wrote in the Miller book that there were only three Boosters (MFHM.173). It was only in April 1938 that they yielded to "outside pressure" (ibid.) and changed the title. In a parting notice the first Delta somewhat unfairly observed: "It should be remembered that circumstances imposed upon us a title which we did our best to live down to"(D.i.inside front cover). As late as in January of that year Miller was still speaking of "the Booster", albeit pessimistically about its chances for survival. There were still some Country Club members around "who might get us into trouble"(Corr.121). Miller and his friends were very aware of and apprehensive about the threat which an angered American Country Club posed, and the impression (which Jay Martin conveys) that there was a carefree, bourgeois baiting session when President Prather's letter arrived seems somewhat one-sided:

> The editors consulted. If vaginas were so eminently capable of getting the bourgeois upset, then they should have vaginas in abundance. They decided to make their Christmas issue an 'Air-Conditioned Womb Number', even if this spelled the magazine's demise. (Martin 329)

Quite aside from the fact that the second, pre-scandal Booster had already announced (in two places) that a special number on "the Womb" was forthcoming (1), Miller's biographer reiterates Perlès' misapprehension about the actual number of Boosters published and their names. There was an "Xmas Special" but it was called the "Tri-Lingual Womb Number" and was not at all concerned wholly with the "womb". This was the number the Club's notice of dissociation appeared

in. The "Air-Conditioned Womb Number" on the other hand was the fourth and last Booster. All contributions there deal with the title's subject. It was issued in December and January....

"The city is blackened, smoked and melancholic", Anais Nin wrote in her diary, but the autumn of 1937 at the Villa Seurat vibrated with activity and energy: "The activity Henry has created is extraordinary. He lives in a whirlpool, drawing everyone to him" (AN.ii.267). Miller was working on Tropic of Capricorn. Durrell was well-integrated in the doings of Miller and Perlès, even though he was not always entirely happy about this. Miller and Durrell were great friends now, but while the latter was slowly maturing to a more independent view, the former was still the stronger. "He is surrounded by admiring disciples who flatter him and do not question his opinions", Anais Nin observed, "He even cowed Larry with: 'If you don't understand Picasso there is a limitation in you'" (AN.ii.264). A special friendship had developed between Anais Nin and Durrell, who was busy revising The Black Book. Anais Nin was still a part of the Villa Seurat, even though she too rebelled at times, feeling "tired of holding out against drinking, futile talks" (AN.ii.267). However, more often than not, it seems, these Villa Seurat days were full of reward, news of this or that article or story being accepted filling the group with content and encouragement. The T'ien Hsia Monthly, which Hugh Gordon Portues called "the most interesting periodical, I think, in the whole Orient" (Purpose.x.4.243), had just published a Villa Seurat item, Miller's "The Tree of Life and Death", while Night and Day of London bought his "Portrait of General Grant" to be published the following month(2). Though the Criterion turned down her Rank essay, the American Quarterly decided to print Anais Nin's "Birth" as well as "Women in Creation" (AN.ii.267).

In these days David Gascoyne re-entered Anais Nin's diary. He had visited her the year before with a poem called "City of Myth" (AN.ii.126). Unlike her deep devotion to Durrell, she felt little affection for him, comparing his inner self with "a dead Arab", wrapped in multiple white bandages"(AN.ii.267). Gascoyne had left his own journal with her, but she was not impressed, finding it "full of reticences and evasions"(AN.ii.267). Nowhere in her diary does she

express warmth for him, and one has difficulties understanding why they met so often, why they exchanged books and diaries, and why they became "friends". Seeing that Anais Nin frequently reworked her diaries, one cannot escape the impression that she later obliterated passages favourable to Gascoyne. He was always referred to as "Gascoyne" in her diary while they obviously called each other by their Christian names (DG.ii.32). In February 1938, at any rate, she inquired whether he had written anyhing new in his journal and whether she might be able to see it. "I had to confess that there was nothing to see," Gascoyne noted: "as I had not written any more since the time when we first met and I read her own diary"(DG.ii.32). It is a sad irony that Anais Nin accused Gascoyne of self-centredness: "Gascoyne comes ... to see if he can catch his own narcissistic image in the pool of my understanding. The volume of the diary he read enlarged the space of his prison" (AN.ii.270).

The third Villa Seurat Booster was the work of a new printer (in Brussells), but the general appearance was much like that of its two predecessors. There were still as many advertisements as before, strewn across the usual fifty pages and ranging from certain hotels which the Booster recommended to Fouchers Bonbons, from Walk-Over Shoes to silk hosiery by Kismet on the rue St-Honoré. Even the defiant golfer in Mr.Riddle's ridiculed plus-fours had returned to guard the Booster's pages...

However, the end of the review's singularity was heralded by some changes made. The staff of untrained editors was now radically reduced, the motley assortment of editorial departments abolished, and all that remained was a conventional "editorial board" with a number of associate editors. Along with the Country Club, Walter Lowenfels, as we have noted above, dissociated himself from the review in "Another Announcement". His name was also taken from the projected Booster Broadsides. Why Brassai and Tcheou Nien-Sien dropped away is not clear. Reichel did not particularly like the Booster. Now, at any rate, the de facto dominance of the Villa Seurat trio was established in the editorial list.

The caption which had anounced the magazine as founded by the American Country Club was taken out, and although the editors might have felt freer now, there was reason to regret the absence of the curious Club notes, the unusual effect created by their supine monotonousness juxtaposed with the spiralling tirades of Miller's and Durrell's prose. The third Booster also did away with the gratis inserts, those odd letters which had come from Miller's files. It also broke with the tradition of the "foreign language contributions" on the back cover of the magazine "poems, critical essays, prophecies, mental disturbances" (B.ii.12). Now, all one could find there were the lines: "OUT OF THE GORSE / CAME A HOMOSEXUAL HORSE". This couplet, for which the Boosters made acknowledgements to The London Aphrodite, the magazine, incidentally which had announced in the first issue: "Only six numbers if The London Aphrodite will be issued"(LA.i.1), received such prominent placing, it would seem, at the suggestion of Lawrence Durrell. Why the Boosters no longer put a foreign language item on the back cover is difficult to say, but this little poem by Richard Blake Brown had caught Durrell's comical eye even before he left Corfu. In a letter to Miller he had referred to it (tongue in cheek) as "that stroke of genius, so economical in its touch, so deft, so bland, so unique" (Corr.68). But it may be too much to say that from now on poetry and Durrell were on the advance.

More important than the back-cover change was the abolition of Sportlight, which had been one of the strongholds of the Booster's burlesque spirit. Once the Country Club conection was destroyed, Charles Norden's comical column had lost, it seems, its raison d'être. The editors were unburdened of a very tangible target for their jibes and ironies - the members of the Country Club. The Boosters now no longer needed to cloak their writings or to adopt with a laugh the forms and formalities of a club sheet. But the loss of this audience, as enervating as it was immediate, also robbed the Booster of the source of some of its spontaneity and vitality. The retreat into a world which was purely artistic and avant-garde relaxed much of the immediate tension and moved the Ozoir-la-Ferrière antithesis into a less poignant and more generalised distance: the abstract Bourgeois with a capital "B" replaced Elmer S.Prather in the flesh. This was a loss.

And yet, this first "womb" number still offered some original contributions and zest and it was still a Booster, filled with instances of burlesque defiance, of "boosting" and other tastes for the bizarre. The editorial (by Durrell) was the last one the Villa Seurat issued, a bantering, emphatical and logomaniacal restatement of the review's (allegedly) a-political and anti-social positions. The mock-serious announcement about Walter Lowenfels's dissociation included a pin-prick of Booster playfulness ("Will that do, Walter?"). Other contributions such as Anais Nin's "Boost" and Miller's "How to Lead the Podiatric Life" upheld some of the impetus of the first two Boosters.

Miller's comical tribute to the chiropodist, who, according to Perlès had "the heart of a queen" and was also "the only woman in Paris who got a laugh out of The Booster"(MFHM.172), matched in tone and technique the earlier Fashion article. In a loquacious and mock-authoritative manner, Miller painted out in detail a topic he knew little or nothing about, spicing the whole dish with jokes and incongruous quotes, with rough suggestions about cutting off the legs of an incurable dachshund and throwing them into the Seine. "There is a cure for everything, especially in chiropody"(B.iii.40). Mrs.Alexander, the chiropodist, actually placed an advertisement in the Booster, and, having no money herself, paid Miller and Perlès in kind. Miller's article was a sign of gratitude but characteristically "this eminent graduate of the Illinois College of Surgical Chiropody" was gently lampooned as well.

Anais Nin mentioned the episode which disgusted her and seemed to her a typical instance of Miller's very worst sides: "Henry was delighting in the humour about corns, dirty feet, etc. ... Henry hysterical with amusement"(AN.ii.262). She was deeply sceptical of the Booster's vulgarity and "dadaistic" abandon, and yet, when it came to writing a "boost" for Miller's Black Spring she did not hold back her help. Like her previous introduction to Cancer, this "boost" was an acclamation, a poetic panegyric, resulting from a good understanding of the writer and the man, of his work and his intentions. There was Henry Miller, she wrote, wholly alive both "in the peaty soil, among the roots of things, or amidst the ecstasies" (B.iii.27). It was a precise observa-

tion about her friend's two-pronged modus operandi, and on this idea she improvised and played:

> Always there is the smell of the street, the smell of human beings. Even in the upper galleries of metaphysics it smells of truth, of honesty and of naturalness. (B.iii.27)

It is true, the diary entries of the period evince that Anais Nin no longer whole-heartedly admired Miller's writings, that she had grown away from him, disliked the megalomaniacal forays into the world of the idea, as well as the impersonal quality of much of his work. In spite of all differences, however, this "boost" made clear that the sense of group solidarity (still) outweighed the tendency to criticise - at least in public. Moreover, there are also numerous notices in her journals which did not contradict this "boost" at all. In the summer of 1937, for instance she said: "In Henry's writing there is a sonority, a fever, an amplitude. Cosmic Wind"(AN.ii.205). Her praise of Black Spring in the Booster was no outright contradiction of the frequently (but not always) sceptical view in her diary. The book, she said, "is life lived on all levels simultaneously", which was the highest praise Anais Nin had to offer and she did so without ambiguity or irony.

When Jay Martin suggested that Miller and his friends would now concentrate on vaginas and sex in order to cut the umbilical cord which connected them with the Country Club, he was mistaken. The first example of genuinely extreme literature came from a different sector altogether. "At moments he stands shouting like a prophet, cursing, vilifying, denouncing, seeing into the future", Anais Nin wrote in her "boost", and indeed, the "Epilogue to Black Spring" which followed, was an expansive scenario of disgust, a horrific vision of impending catastrophe, all described in a wild rush of pictures, waves upon waves of hair-raising images. This excerpt was a sample of Miller's "prophetic" and vilifying predisposition. The following are random quotations from a single page:

They give off a stench, these mothers with the coming monsters in their wombs. Even before it is exposed to the metallic rays of a dead sun the foetus rots way. ... Spring wavers in the air like a corrugated sky soaked with sweat and pus. ... Over the open sewer of the earth is spread a magnificent green carpet made of the foam and snot of the epileptic. ... Mothers without legs bump along on their stiff, swollen bellies. (B.iii.28)

In his review of Black Spring George Orwell regretted that Miller's prose often runs off suddenly into impotent quasi-surrealistic realms, into "a kind of Mickey Mouse universe" (CE.i.260f). Miller's dramatic sense, his strong earthy side, his ability to return to ordinary reality as easily as he left it, these usually prevented the etherial stagnation Orwell warned of. The reader of "Epilogue to Black Spring", however, may feel that in this instance Miller was unable to push the button and turn off the metaphor machine. Using such a multitude of violent images seems in the end contrived. Credibility suffers. Perhaps Miller felt the same way, because "Epilogue to Black Spring" was not the epilogue to Black Spring at all. The coda to the book as published was "Megalopolitan Mania". Only a handful of sentences from the Booster contribution can actually be found in Black Spring and they are in the section "Walking Up and Down in China" (3). It seems likely that Miller took the occasion to print some part of the original manuscript which he had reluctantly cut out of Black Spring while revising it some years before. Here was another function of the Booster!

"Limbs Ancient and Modern" was Perlès' contribution to the penultimate Booster (4). It was taken from a work in progress, his first novel in English, that was planned to be published in 1938. As it turned out, "Limbs" was integrated much later into The Renegade, the book which he published during the war. We have earlier discussed this hastily assembled patchwork. "Limbs Ancient and Modern", at any rate, was divided into two parts. The first depicts the narrator waking up to find that he was not alone in bed: "I saw a lovely Jackie Coogan face and a pair of wonderful café-crème colored breasts" (B.iii.18). The second part was an elaborate account of a nocturnal stroll around the Les Halles area. There were some stilted phrases in this account, like the "lugubrious silences of unavowable intervals; the outcries of pain, more shameful than vice..."(B.iii.20). "Limbs", however, described a

bit of the world which Miller and Perlès inhabited in the Clichy days, a bit of that "ordinary reality" Orwell often spoke of, a reality unknown to the honourable Country Club members. It was indeed largely thanks to Alfred Perlès that Paris and la vie parisienne entered the pages of the magazine at all. And, in true Booster manner, the advertisement which followed "Limbs" was addressed to "Visitors coming to PARIS" and read: "APPLY FOR A LADY GUIDE"....

William Saroyan, demoted from the Booster editorial board to associate editor, contributed "Poem, Story, Novel", an article which gives a good impression of his hazy aesthetic, of his transcendental orientation and his emphasis on the individual. Much of it could in fact have come from the nib of the later Miller. Saroyan was obviously writing from the rostrum of success, a literary practioner preaching and pontificating, throwing his reputation behind "arguments" which often disappear on the one side into mystical mists and on the other into the realm of the obvious and platitudinous. His advice to the young writer, that he should "teach himself to stand well, to breathe well, to walk well, to weep well, to look well, to be well and to pray piously" was not meant ironically. His observations were oppressingly patronising, dogmatic and occasionally "poetic", that is to say, irrational and impossible to understand. Saroyan here demonstrated how one can say the most incomprehensible things in a simple and artless way:

> The big universe though, is now: is. The endless universe is the poet himself ending: and the poet himself beginning. And a poem is a century in the timelessness of the uncalendar of the man himself somewhere alone and unalone. (B.iii.41)

Although some of his remarks were more comprehensible, what transpired when the fog lifted was that Saroyan was opposed to contrivance in literature and felt that a work of art should be an immediate and honest and intense expression of mature experience! Two ideas directly connected up with Villa Seurat attitudes, that poetry was "always unrelated to recent revolutions, international affairs, wars, diplomacy, riots, and so forth"(B.iii.41) and that with great pain and intensity one could form one's own life into something resembling a work of art: "I think the novel Christ lived is almost a first-rate

novel"(B.iii.46).

The November Booster also included work by Patrick Evans, the young Gerald Durrell, Raymond Queneau, Milada Souckova and Oswell Blakeston. Though all of these contributions bear some relation to Booster positions, two other items were singularly poignant. They are Hans Reichel's "Letter for the Gostersools" and David Gascoyne's Blind Man's Buff excerpts.

Hans Reichel's tri-lingual epistle, pertinently placed behind the editorial, was not only the work of a man in the process of losing his grip on sanity in the manner of Nijinsky's diary or Nietzsche's later letters. It was not only (in the view of the editors) the work of a man possessed of a rare and clear vision of a deeper order concealed behind reality - "'Chaos' is only a special kind of Ordnung" -, but also an instance of the artist wrestling passionately with the means of communication at his disposal in order to express what can hardly be expressed at all. Miller later said: "His speech was often strange, if not to say eerie" (IntHML.v.3). Reichel's attempts in fact frequently ended in a violent rampage, especially if he had too much to drink. Perlès recalled:

> The ideas he wanted to convey were not easily expressible in any language, and since his English was rather inadequate and his French not too good, he employed a sort of homogenized language porridge in which lumps of German were mixed up, indissolubly and unintelligibly, with his English and French. (MFHM.143)

This was also an apt description of the letter's language, a jumbling and twitching and stuttering. Nevertheless, in contrast to Saroyan's fanciful exercises in the "irrational", there was no mistaking that this was the real thing, a true manifestation of those "mental disturbances" which the Boosters were forever searching out. And what is more: "Through the seeming bubble which sometimes gushed from his lips there often emerged gems of such penetrating simple truth that it made one's flesh creep"(IntHML.v.4). In this letter to the ghost souls (Geisterseelen), Reichel described what appears at first sight a vaguely surrealistic domain: "In this land the sand stands up and is going away as a camel -; two flowers are looking mutual in each other's eyes

and they fly away as butterflies". Later, however, the land of the "Gostersools" turns into an idealistic island, a kind of Platonic realm of which our reality in its manifold profusion was a mere reflection. It was the artist's (age-old) business, as Reichel discovered, to "recognize" that essential reality. The ensuing creative act, however, was a result of inspiration and had "nothing to do with my will to form (Gestaltungswille")"(B.iii.10). And Reichel described in the breathless and hurried way of a child how, walking by the Notre Dame cathedral on a stormy day, he found a gargoylic head before his feet. It had broken in two pieces. One part resembled Miller's face, the other a laughing Alf (Perlès). Putting the two pieces together they suddenly lost their individuality: "Not half Henry - and half Alf. / Simply one face!". Highly disturbed he "runned home", contemplated his paintings and began to see "that all gosters are million pieces in one face"; he had discovered "la supériorité générale". More convincing than Durrell's "Zero" or "Asylum in the Snow", more convincing because less eloquent, this strange epistle strikes one as genuine, Reichel speaking as the irrationalist ought to speak. "That which people calls 'Gesunder Menschenverstand' n'existe pas. And insanity not more and not less than a new Dimension". Reichel was a paranoiac and an alcoholic and he was temporarily interned in St.Anne shortly before the war. His letter carried weight because he was writing not <u>about</u> the new Dimension, but <u>from within</u> it: "I write to you from the land of the Gostersools!!" (B.iii.9).

Reichel declared categorically that insanity was but another dimension, chaos no more than another kind of order. The painter, evidently aware of his very tenuous hold on ordinary reality, concluded his epistle on a note of self-acceptance, even pride: "Truly the emperor of depths"(B.iii.10). In truth, in these years Reichel was a very unhappy man, lonely in the empty realm of his sovereignity. No human being, no love and no warmth accompanied him there, even though most of the Villa Seurat habitués felt that they went through similar states, felt themselves as venturing into a solitary and painful land on the brink of insanity whenever engaged in creative activity. But what distinguished Reichel from his friends was that the latter were only occasional visitors, as it were, with no great problems returning to <u>terra firma</u>.

A possible exception was David Gascoyne: "I have looked at myself, and I have seen the void" (DG.ii.68). More intensely than the other Villa Seurat frequenters Gascoyne struggled with the question of how one could live in the terrible awareness of a dark abyss of meaninglessness yawning beneath one's feet. Throughout his Paris years and under the influence of Fondane and Jouve, Gascoyne, who was to suffer "periods of severe depression and mental breakdown" (DG.i.14) after the war, had become increasingly conscious of what he called the Pit and although he knew of the dangers involved in "the unblindfolded contemplation of existence" (DG.ii.68), it seems that for him there was no real possibility of turning back. More articulate than Reichel, Gascoyne nevertheless belonged to the same tribe. He was less and less able to close his eyes or to return, though (still) filled with the desire to create from this awareness, to share with others his vision and his pain. In the contribution to the November Booster he wrote about the visionary artist:

> The expression which he gives to his anguish, the articulation of his despair, becomes a pearl: a 'black' pearl perhaps, but which compensates him to a certain extent for the groaning labour of its bringing forth. (B.iii.34)

Gascoyne was a poet, but he also wrote fiction and criticism and kept a journal. His deep experience of anguish and of a growing spiritual awareness were evident in the poems of this period, and they were present in his journal, the tone of which moved from uncertainty and doubt to culminate in an almost over-emphatic spiritual certainty in the late summer of 1939. The book which he planned to write in those early days of the war was going to be "a sort of philosophically determined prophecy (The Greater Crisis : the Holy Revolution : the New Christendom)" (DG.ii.140). It was in this period that he destroyed almost all his old manuscripts and papers, keeping only a handful of poems, his journal and the Blind Man's Buff notebook. The latter was important, since, in the opinion of Gascoyne, it did "already contain, I think, the living germ of a philosophy corresponding to the needs of our time"(DG.ii.139). It was from this notebook that the Booster editors published some excerpts. Unfortunately the notebook is now lost, and the three pages in the Booster are all that remains. One

will never be able to see whether Gascoyne's high expectations were really justified. His expectations were indeed very high; in November 1938 he entered into his journal:

> Little by little, I begin to see how to formulate the essentials of a new morality. 'Blind Man's Buff', which at present is quite fragmentary and unpublishable, may gradually develop into a work expounding the principles I am beginning to see with increasing clarity. (DG.ii.97)

And in the Booster month, in Septemeber 1937, Gascoyne put down the following:

> Certain elements that detach themselves from the line of thought I am developing in 'Blind Man's Buff' may be destined to provide the spine for any poetry I may write in the future. (DG.ii.22)

The notebook was the more public, less subjective companion-piece to the journal with its spontaneous compendium of ideas, inspirations, opinions and quotes, thoughts ranging from aesthetic and philosophical speculation to private worries, say, about money or love (5). "Blind Man's Buff" presented Gascoyne's thoughts in short sections, reminiscent of Shestov's paragraphing in All Things are Possible, under headings such as the following: "Trouble", "The English", "Excess", "Confusion", "Religion", "Chance". Each of these passages can be related to experiences described in his journal, and they are of importance to his poetry as well. One need only compare his comments about Durrell's "English Death" in the journal with his caustic attacks on his countrymen in the Booster. Here he said that the English evince "an unparalleled example of spiritual virginity" (B.iii.34).

Night Thoughts, Gascoyne's long radio poem of 1955 may be said to have continued a line coming from an idea articulated in the notebook under the heading "Religion". Here he said that at night, in bed and alone, the lights switched out, the human being is confronted with himself; material comforts, progress, science and factories are of little help to him then. This passage was in fact an overt criticism of the assertive claims of Soviet Communism. Though he had recognised the insufficiencies of communism, at this stage Gascoyne still felt the

need, as he said in his journal, to "express all my ideas in the form of an argument against Marxists"(DG.ii.63). The 'Blind Man's Buff' attack on the Soviets was carried out under the banner of "Religion". Nevertheless, even a year later, David Gascoyne still thought that Marxism offered a "far better solution" to contemporary problems than any other concept. However, as it was still radically insufficient, it was up to him, he had come to feel, to "propose a solution more truly satisfying to actual human needs" (DG.ii.63). The "Blind Man's Buff" notebook was to be the vehicle of this new solution...

Did there exist points of intersection with the Boosters, who were, after all, temperamentally so very different? Having renounced group affiliations, Gascoyne said in 1937 that he wanted to concentrate on man "as a social being, as a psychological being and as a spiritual being"(DG.i.110). Though the Boosters were not interested in the zoon politikon and though their conception of man the "spiritual being" diverged considerably, as we have seen, from Gascoyne's, there were echoes in his "Blind Man's Buff" excerpts of Villa Seurat attitudes. The section entitled "Confusion", for instance, spoke eloquently of chaos as being "the inescapable condition of man". Confusion and chaos would have to be accepted and welcomed. That was the "argument" not only of Reichel's tri-lingual missive, but also of Cancer and Black Spring and other Villa Seurat publications, including the three Booster editorials. Gascoyne: "We cannot surpass futility until we have accepted it"(B.iii.35).

As we have indicated, one of the distinctive differences with Miller and Durrell was Gascoyne's almost ubiquitious seriousness of tone. "Despair, madness, death; the domain of tragedy. It is into this domain that all search for the absolute leads"(B.iii.35). It was this almost unrelenting darkness which one hardly finds in Miller's work or in Durrell's. "Despair, the one firm foundation", Gascoyne insisted, and the Boosters agreed no more than half-heartedly: "Despair, and the courage to live it out, are alone capable of restoring grandeur and significance to existence"(DG.iii.35). There is an entry in the journal from March 1938 which illustrates what separated Gascoyne from the Boosters. Discussing the possibility of war at lunch in Durrell's Parc de Montsouris flat, Miller remarked that while their host was so

strongly favoured by fortune that he would always come through, Gascyone's future held darkness and gloom in store. It was with a peculiar relish that Gascoyne recorded in detail Miller's prophecy: "You're not like that; you ask for trouble; your destiny can only be a tragic one"(DG.ii.38). Unfortunately, Miller's prediction proved all too accurate....

Before turning to the "Air-Conditioned Womb Number", two minor points deserve mention. A note by "Editions du Booster" announced the publication of a volume of poems by Cecily Mackworth in December 1937. In none of the books about Miller and his friends is there a reference to either these "Editions", to the authoress or to her poetry pamphlet. In contrast to so many of the projects proposed in this issue of the Booster (Anais Nin's diaries, special Booster numbers, Booster Broadsides), a small unpaginated booklet entitled Eleven Poems by Cecily Mackworth was actually published that winter. Cecily Mackworth, who later became a novelist and literary critic, was a young English student who frequented for a while the Villa Seurat. She may have belonged to the group of uncritical "disciples" Anais Nin saw congregating around Miller. Indeed, Miller himself paid the costs of publication. The poems themselves were not remarkable. To publish Eleven Poems was an act of friendship more than anything else, though some Parisian scenery was well depicted and some lines, in "Metamorphosis" for instance, may have appealed to (as it had been inspired by) the Villa Seurat's "womb" obsession: "Cried for the kind womb / Crouched from air as sharp as knife". It is not clear why this volume was not a part of the Booster Broadside programme, though the title "Editions du Booster" seems to suggest, once again, that the Booster venture was not intended to stop at the limits of a little magazine, but was conceived of as a part of a larger pattern...

Henry Miller's podiatric essay was not the Booster's only gesture of gratitude for a new advertisement. Beside the photograph of a black woman in evening dress playing the trumpet there was the cryptic message: "Valaida / Snow of / Jimmy's bar / Brings Gostersools / from near / and far / Bring / Sleighbells / Say to the driver Cat Roo Igg Hens" (B.iii.47). A reference to an advertisement by Chez Jimmy, at 4, rue Huyghens, a bar and cabaret which still offered "THAT OLD 1927

ATMOSPHERE", this boost pointed the reader to Reichel's letter from "the Land of the Gostersools". Unlike the painter's tri-lingual "mental disturbances", however, and unlike Gascoyne's deliberations on despair and madness and the "domain of tragedy", this phonetic advice for American tourists had no dark overtones for the Boosters. It recalled to Miller and Durrell what must have been a memorable evening at Jimmy's cabaret with Valaida Snow performing there. Valaida Snow was a jazz performer of exceptional talents. In a nostalgic letter about the Booster days of the autumn of 1945, Durrell did not omit to mention this versatile "Queen of the Trumpet", whose celebrated musical performances in various revues, including the hit musical Rhapsody in Black, had taken her across the world from the mid 1920s on (Corr.211). She was a star. Admired by jazz critics (Charles Delauney) and musicians (Louis Armstrong) alike, this extraordinary woman not only played the cello, bass, violin, guitar, banjo, mandolin, harp, accordian, clarinet and saxophone, apart from the trumpet, she also danced in a way that Armstrong was said to have commented on: "Boy, I never saw anything that great". Highly successful from the early 1930s on - she had an orchid-coloured chaffeur-driven Mercedes - she is said to have spoken seven languages and to have appeared in a number of films such as Take it From Me , Irresistible You and a French mystery film starring Erich von Stroheim called L'alibi. She was a wanderer, travelled to the East several times, restless, played and sang and danced in Shanghai and in Berlin, in New York and Cairo, in Rangoon and Chicago, in Batavia and Calcutta. She even performed in Soviet Russia in 1929. In London in 1934 she starred in Blackbirds of 1934 which was very successful at the London Coliseum. She returned to London in the following years, also to record numerous songs. After one of these recording sessions - some say she was the first to record swing in England - she came to Paris, where she shared the bill with Maurice Chevalier. She was a star, loved by the musicians she played with, and the Boosters were among her countless admirers. But again, as with Reichel and Fondane and so many other actors in this drama of the late 1930s, Valaida Snow, was caught up in "the domain of tragedy" as the war interfered horribly in the rising curve of her unusual career. Valaida Snow stayed in Europe after the war broke out. She continued to appear in Sweden and in Denmark, which was occupied by the Germans. In late 1941, it seems,

she was arrested by the police, her possessions confiscated, including a golden trumpet given to her by Queen Wilhelmina. She was imprisoned in a camp at Wester-Faengle. After at least a year (some said three years) of deprivation and brutal mistreatment - she was apparently whipped for protecting a little girl - an exchange arranged by the Copenhagen police chief (a jazz fan) released her from her sufferings. When she arrived in New York in late 1942, she is said to have weighed only 74 pounds. Eventually she returned to the stage and worked until 1956, the year of her death. But she is now almost entirely forgotten(6). "Valaida / Snow of / Jimmy's bar / Brings Gostersools / from near / and far "(B.iii.47). In retrospect, the reference to the ghost-souls of Reichel, himself brutally interned during the war, has an eerie ring about it...

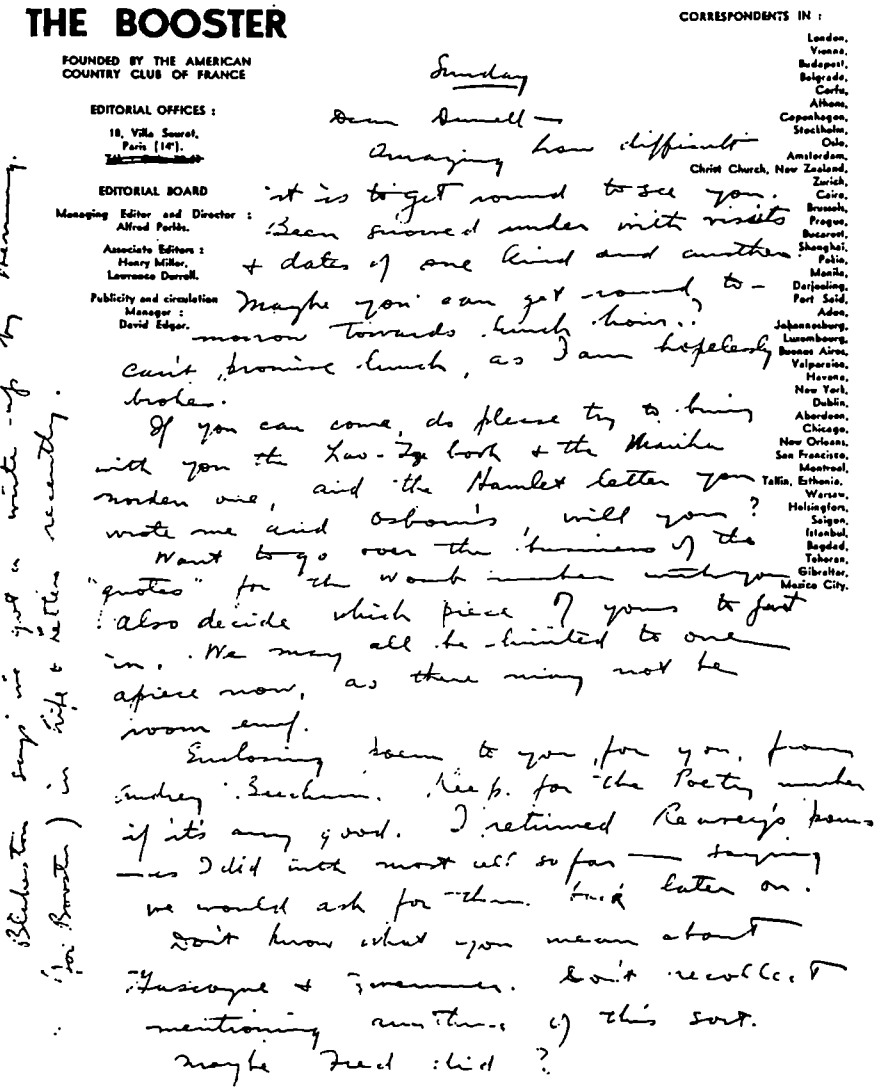
Notes

1. B.ii.12,30.
2. Martin 313; ND.i.26.20f.
3. BS 179; B.iii.30.
4. The chime here is with the standard Anglican hymn book, Hymns Ancient and Modern.
5. Durrell's introduction to the Paris Journal erroneously asserts that what the Booster printed came from the journal (DG.ii.6).
6. This information is taken from a sleeve article by Frank Driggs for the record entitled "VALAIDA. SWING IS THE THING".

VII. The Air-Conditioned Womb Number, December 1937 - January 1938.

The fourth and last Booster was put together in November and early December 1937. "We're re-reading Rank's Trauma of Birth", noted Anais Nin, and this issue, vaguely announced as the special "womb number" in October, had as its subject the intra-uterine world. It was delivered professionally by the Villa Seurat group, who on this occasion called themselves "The Womb Sextette". Both in the fact that it was organised around one topic and in its appearance this last of the Boosters diverged from the three preceding numbers. The editorial board was unchanged, it is true, though Betty Ryan's name was added as "Secrétaire de Rédaction". But the Country Club ban was evidently taking effect. The issue had shrunk to a mere 26 pages, which was about a half the size of the preceding numbers. "We may all be limited to one a piece now, as there may not be room enuf" Miller wrote to Durrell (Corr.facs.letter). At one time the number of commercial advertisers had been over fifty. By now they had all but disappeared. Eight small advertisements were all that was left. The magazine was poorer - and graphically less interesting as well. Where there had previously been a page of ornate advertisements per page of text, there were now about two and a half pages of text to one advertisement. The only full page ad was by a magazine called the Phoenix, which presumably brought no money, as its editor, J.P.Cooney, in turn advertised the Booster and its "Broadsides". In short, the magazine was setting into financial difficulties and it was not long before Miller wrote to Durrell that he did not quite know how to pay the printer (Corr.121).

It was not only in make-up and volume that this number differed from the foregoing ones. The Booster did away with overt editorial statements. Maybe this was because the womb-metaphor gave the issue a more definite direction than the eclectic diffuseness of the other Boosters. Another difference was that there was no "boost" to be found in this number - although a eulogistic blurb for Perlès' Le Quatuor carried on some of the old boosting spirit.



THE BOOSTER

FOUNDED BY THE AMERICAN COUNTRY CLUB OF FRANCE

EDITORIAL OFFICES :
18, Villa Seurat, Paris (14e).

EDITORIAL BOARD
Managing Editor and Director : Alfred Perlès.
Associate Editors : Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell.
Publicity and circulation Manager : David Edgar.

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London, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Corfu, Athens, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Amsterdam, Christ Church, New Zealand, Zurich, Cairo, Brussels, Prague, Bucarest, Shanghai, Pekin, Manila, Darjeeling, Port Said, Aden, Johannesburg, Luxembourg, Buenos Aires, Valparaiso, Havana, New York, Dublin, Aberdeen, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, Montreal, Tallin, Esthonia, Warsaw, Helsingfors, Saigon, Istanbul, Bagdad, Teheran, Gibraltar, Mexico City.

Sunday

Dear Durrell —

Amazing how difficult it is to get round to see you. Been snowed under with visits + dates of one kind and another. Maybe you can get round to — morrow towards lunch hour.. can't promise lunch, as I am hopelessly broke.

If you can come, do please try to bring with you the Law - Zo book + the Mauriac novel, and the Hamlet letter you wrote me and Osborn's, will you?

Want to go over the business of the "quotes" for the womb number with you. Also decide which piece ? yours to print in. We may all be limited to one apiece now, as there may not be room enuf.

Enclosing poem to you for you, from Audrey Beecham. Neb. for the Poetry number if it's any good. I returned Ramsey's poems — as I did not want us to forget — saying we would ask for them [illegible] later on.

Don't know what you mean about Hurricane + Typhoon. Don't recollect mentioning anything of this sort. Maybe Fred did ?

(Blackstone says it just as well — up to you. Booster) in fifth + letter recently.

A note by Miller to Durrell

Once again, the back cover's purpose had changed. "Want to go over the business of the 'quotes' for the Womb number with you", Miller wrote to Durrell(Corr.facs.letter). An assortment of exotic sayings from the Villa Seurat cabinet of heroes now decorated the back cover. It was a selection which reached from Lawrence to Buddha and from Emerson to the Upanishads. There was a quote from The Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenollos a (a favourite of Miller - and Ezra Pound) (Hamlet 123), as well as one by Lao Tse. For all their anti-traditionalism and revolt, the Boosters (like the surrealists before them) found it necessary or appropriate to establish its own family tree. Whatever the reasons for this need for justification and confirmation from the past, the Boosters were pleased to present themselves rocking on the cosy lap of a grandfatherly Walt, who gently urged them on, as we have noted above, singing what was also the first editorial's refrain, there "will never be more perfection than there is now" (B.iv.26)...

This number also deviated from other Boosters by including only prose pieces (aside from the Whitman lines). It was, in fact, the most homogeneous and streamlined of the Boosters, circling, as we have said, around one thematic complex. Presumably the Air-Conditioned Womb Number got its title from a passage in the Black Book in which the protagonist describes how he is sitting in a womb-like cinema ("Fancy the amnion having lighted walls and mock-Egyptian frescoes on it" (BB.172) and sends out to the clitoris for an ice. This passage won Miller's explicit approval (Corr.98). The issue was put together with less haste than the others, it seems, as at least two contributions were written especially for it(1). For once, the editors appear to have had time at their disposal: if a special womb number was first announced in the October Booster then the idea must have been hatched as early as September, when that number was put together. Without necessarily implying any systematic preparation, the common re-reading of the Trauma of Birth suggests not only a continued interest in the "womb", but also a revival of interest in the teachings of Otto Rank (AN.ii.267).

The Rankian revival may well have been brought about by that enthusiastic novice to the "womb", Lawrence Durrell. His literary "allegories" of the intra-uterine state in The Black Book were universally admired by the Villa Seurat set. In the endless discussions about the artist's role, "womb", as we have noted above, was a term which came up again and again. Vaguely, Otto Rank's book on the birth-trauma provided the theoretical super-structure. In the 1924 Trauma der Geburt Rank had argued that man's existence on this world was determined solely by two experiences, the paradisal state of being in the mother's womb and the traumatic experience of birth. Man, he said, strove to return to the peace of the womb-condition, but having recognised that this was impossible, he now directed all his efforts at re-creating the womb, the pleasurable intra-uterine life symbolically - by "symbol-formation". In effect, the "whole circle of human creation", Rank said, all civilisation and culture, all art, science, philosophy, mythology, religion, architecture and so forth, were nothing else than "an attempt to materialize the primal situation - i.e., to undo the primal trauma"(ORTB.103). Thus man created and shaped his own world in remembrance of the pre-natal state and he did it by means of symbols in order not to be reminded of the trauma of birth:

> For the real world itself created by man, has proved to be a chain of symbol formations, uninterruptedly renewed, which must represent not merely a substitute for the lost primal reality which they copy as faithfully as possible, but at the same time must remind us as little as possible of the primal trauma connected with it. (ORTB.100)

Rank, in short, suggested that the inner tension between remembrances of the primal reality and the first trauma was the inner dynamism which he considered "the real principle of the development of man" (ORTB.104).

The psychological model which Rank had developed while still associated with Freud - perhaps one should say, on the latter's suggestion that the birth trauma was the very first experience of anxiety (LMSF.191) - was lucid and comprehensible. It was also rigid and dogmatic and monocausal. In the later Art and Artist (1932), a work which was considerably more mature and sophisticated, as we have

seen, he did not repeat the rash attempt to explain everything under the sun as a reaction to the experience of birth; in fact, he hardly mentions this trauma theory at all. It was no wonder that Miller and friends were more interested in the flexible and complex Art and Artist. For them the Trauma of Birth was "a pot-pourri of idealogical pish posh"(Hamlet 214). Nevertheless, in the Booster days, the romantics in the Villa Seurat rejoiced in the simple idea of the "womb" as a paradise lost, and the "primal goal" of Rank's white-tiled terminology and ferocious studiousness (ORTB.99) added both scope and significance to the age-old womb-tomb complex. Each of the last Booster's "Womb Sextette" responded to the "womb" complex, and though they responed in different ways and although sometimes only the vaguest traces of Rankian thought are discernible, the Trauma of Birth was for them an important stimulus, a field of reference, an object of discussion and common intellectual experience....

> The desire to get back into the womb can become, in a creative way, a making of a womb out of the whole world, including everything in the womb (the city, the enlarged universe of Black Spring, of The Black Book), the all-englobing, all-encompassing womb, holding everything. Not being able to re-enter the womb, the artist becomes the womb. (AN.ii.173)

Anais Nin, who wrote those lines in February 1937, was a member of the "Womb Sextette". In "The Paper Womb" she described the diary which she began as a young girl of eleven and which became a "womb" for her. No reader of her earlier journals will have missed the impression that her obsessive diary-keeping was a refuge, a "symbol-formation"(Rank) by which to overcome the trauma of separation from her beloved father. The prose piece which she contributed to the Booster was later re-titled "The Labyrinth" and in this labyrinth the reader follows Anais Nin's dreamlike motionings. The journey through a strange, at times "interior" landscape, changes from a mysterious garden to a fur-lined "labyrinth of silence", to a white-washed oriental city, "a honey-comb of ivory cells". Anais Nin's meaning, which is usually veiled in metaphor and "symbols", does surface at times, and the more so for readers who are familiar with her diaries. As we have seen in "Le Merle Blanc", Anais Nin's art was also reportage, drawing on experiences she recorded in her diary. Sometimes her diary entries

were transcribed almost verbatim, sometimes they were condensed, transformed, used as "symbols". In "The Paper Womb", the white city mentioned was inspired by her memories of a visit to Morocco, of evening prayers, caped figures, cypresses and serpentines of white streets. Underlining that the womb which "man" had created was but a "substitute", she noted in March 1937 that she - "Writing as a woman" - was exploring "the real womb" and this "real womb" she found symbolised in the streets of Fez:

> The diary ended in Fez, in a city, in a street, in a labyrinth for me, because that was the city which looked most deeply like the womb, with its Arabian Nights gentleness, tranquility and mystery. My self, woman, with grilled windows, veiled eyes. Tortuous streets, secret cells, labyrinths and more labyrinths. (AN.ii.184)

Another diary entry of November 1937 describes her turning her notes into "The Paper Womb": "I write about the labyrinth, the womb, Fez,..." (AN.ii.269). Her journal also disclosed another bit of inspiration. One day, Durrell apparently joked about the impressive appearance of the novelist Anna Whickham, about her hairy hands and nostrils and remarkable moustache, and to this Anais Nin replied: "She must have hair in her womb too, like a sea urchin"(2). Writing about the silence in "The Paper Womb", how the surroundings were covered in reindeer-fur and how the "flesh and the fur walls breathed and drops of white blood fell with the sound of the heart-beat"(B.iv.4), Anais Nin remembered Anna Whickham's womb, but she might have also been stimulated to her fleecy womb-scenario by Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined tea-cup which created such stir at the New York Surrealist Exhibition in 1936. And at times passages from The Black Book come to mind as well: "I live in the womb as a fish in the deep sea", Durrell had written: "The cool drizzle of blood feeds me"(BB.98). In contrast to Durrell's, however, Anais Nin's womb-pieces struck an altogether more serious note. There was no sense of play and rejoicing in spinning out an imaginary situation with its manifold opportunity for comedy. There was rather the desire to discover meaning, and so, solving in true analytical fashion the dream riddle she herself had set, Anais Nin tells the reader at the end of "The Paper Womb" that the white city's labyrinth, the furred and bloody walls were nothing but symbols for her diaristic obsession. "These were the streets of my own diary", she

explained: "I was lost in the labyrinth of my confessions, among the veiled faces of my acts, unveiled only in the diary"(B.iv.5).

As the title of Durrell's contribution indicates, "Down the Styx in an Air-Conditioned Canoe" travestied elements of the traditional underworld passage. In a letter addressed to his dear and recently deceased Auntie Prudence, the affectionate 'Lawrence' depicts in colourful and incongruous detail her forthcoming voyage on Charon's black barge, comically reassuring her all the while that there was "no cause for alarm"(B.iv.14). Drawing on medicinal and scientific terminology, Durrell created a fantastic netherworld scenario, surprising both in its imagery and humour, and reminiscent of that most extensive of back-to-the-womb allegories in The Black Book (BB.173ff): strange happenings the modern psychopompos Lawrence depicted, the carotid tunnel, for instance, where "the water is crowded with small foetae", who are "tremendously amusing little fellows", knocking against the bottom of the boat, "smiling the foetal smile and flirting their limbs in the luminous fluid"(B.iv.15). In a similarly comic anthropomorphism, spermatozoa are described as quaint "shock-troops", learning operational tactics in a classroom, all the while "chanting in unison the only lesson which is aural and compulsory to master", and that is: "Doctor Livingstone, I presume" (B.iv.15). Like an amicable travel-guide the narrator knowingly and with warm irony points out the sights, gives friendly advice and explains to his aunt the purgatorial metamorphosis she will presently undergo. Auntie Prudence will finally reach her destination "clean and shining like a knife-blade"(B.iv.17). The narrator, an initiate into the secrets of the innermost chamber, of what he calls the "womb of the Minotaur", ends the letter with an image of disturbing beauty: "the body of a young boy lying in a pool of blood... The lips hang there like cherries. The eyes are silent behind their beautiful stone lids" (B.iv.17).

Like Anais Nin's contribution this epistle was written in early November 1937. "Larry has written a voyage through the womb which is unmatchable"(AN.ii.267). It was indeed "unmatchable"; unmatchable also in the obvious fun the author had in playing on his idea. But behind Durrell's bantering and his verbal fireworks, there was always present the (rather conventional) notion that death and art (ignoring for the

moment the sexual element) are the purest forms of adventure, of voyaging and exploration of the unknown. Pierre-Marie Michel has offered a mythological-archetypal interpretation of this piece, relating this journey down the Styx in a very elaborate way to the microcos-macrocosm symbolism of medieval mysticism:

> Voyage initiatique se déroulant - s'enroulant serait-il plus juste de dire - vers le point central, avec toute sa théorie de symboles cycliques, nocturnes et mytiques.
>
> Voyage fantastique dans le monde des formes et des images gothiques, au gré d'une imagination ardente, folle, débridée, qui serait celle d'un noveau Jérôme Bosch.
>
> Voyage mythique, sur fon de mythologie!... (Entretiens.xxxii.163)

Michel's argument and symbolical correlations, which, importantly do not take into account the comic aspects of Durrell's jaunt, are put forward in terms that seem somewhat exaggerated. Still, it is true that the voyage bespeaks a lasting concern on the part of Durrell with "des valeurs de la vie intérieure", and patently this search for "le chemin vers le centre de son être" the young Englishman shared with his womb-oriented friends from the Villa Seurat (ibid.165). In Villa Seurat romanticism, the true artist has known 'death' -"What is inside nobody knows except myself"(B.iv.17)- and has experienced a spiritual rebirth. As Miller pointed out in his comments on The Black Book:

> the process of transformation, metamorphoses, symbolization if you will is this same return to the womb tendency, only in reverse. You die out utterly, as you did in our book, in order to achieve a life on a thoroughly new plane of reality. (Corr.79)

Achieving a "new plane of life" was also the theme of Alfred Perlès' contribution. It was another excerpt from Le Quatuor en Ré-Majeur. Miller had boosted this book in the famous What Are You Going to Do About Alf?, a wonderfully zestful begging letter and prototype of the boosting indoor sport described in Durrell's second "Sportlight". Miller announced that, among other delicacies, the reader of this book would discover "how Alf was born one day, in his ninth year, when rolling in the snow at Schmelz, and how all that has happened to him since is but 'a preface to my life'"(Alf Letter 16). It was this

piece, according to Antonia White a "wonderful passage, that stands by itself"(Seven.iv.51f), that the Booster printed, the depiction of the wintery and unnoticed rebirth of Alfred Perlès. "Le monstre était né, je le suis resté depuis. Personne ne s'en apercut, moi non plus, d'ailleurs"(B.iv.19).

In her review of Le Quatuor in Seven, Antonia White found: "Something strange and terrible detaches itself from this book" (Seven.iv.51f). In the Schmelz passage, the child's actions in the snow are curiously senseless, solemn, without motive and without emotion, "sans tristesse, sans joie, sans espoir, sans désespoir..."(B.iv.19), but somehow they seem to be of profound importance. A sense of dislocation and alienation pervades the whole description, and so without going as far as Hilaire Hiler who felt "that Perlès anticipated the ideas and feelings of Kafka, Sartre, Beckett and Ionesco" (IntHML.v.7), one might say that the Austrian who was probably familiar with a number of the literary forerunners of existentialism - he published in February 1938 an essay on Rilke in the T'ien Hsia Monthly and probably knew the work of Kafka - described in this passage what might be considered an "existential" experience. "Je ne suis que la préface de moi-meme" (B.iv.19). An inexplicable sadness precedes the boy's snow-birth, "une de ces tristesses absurdes que l'enfance seule n'explique pas" (B.iv.18), and tristesse is indeed a sentiment which might be compared with Antoine Roquetin's fundamental feeling of disgust in La Nausée. It was also, as Antonia White said, the sadness of the clown:

> and like the clown, one feels that he would rather hurt himself severely than be ignored. To be hurt is, after all, a proof that one exists, and Perlès seems to be continually asking himself whether he does exist as a concrete and identifiable person. (Seven.iv.51)

In parts of Le Quatuor Perlès attempted to get beyond these questions. "All through one has the feeling of a human being, sensitive, perceptive and defenceless", said Antonia White: "trying to construct itself a shell out of contacts and events as the cadis builds its house of floating scraps" (ibid.). To pull oneself out of the mire by one's own bootstraps was the freedom one was condemned to, according to existentialist thought, to establish one's own existence once one

has felt existence intensely. Perhaps it was a coincidence that upon finishing Sartre's La Nausée, David Gascoyne had observed: "To try really to experience one's life, that is to say to feel one's existence, is like trying to build a house with rags and bits of straw with a strong wind blowing" (DG.ii.51). It is not wholly unlikely that Perlès too knew Sartre's work, but it does seem more likely that his existential unease stemmed from his own highly precocious way of life during and after the First World War and from a general Zeitgeist feeling of dislocation, rather than from purely literary or philosophical sources. In contrast to La Nausée Perlès' book was no philosophical novel.

The fourth member of the "Womb Sextette" was William Saroyan. In "The Time Before" he described the life of his mother immediately before he was born, her travels and hardship, her remarkable sturdiness and 'old-country' vigour. "The Time Before" was a declaration of love and as such it rang true. Only the final paragraph, which stands in no direct relation to the preceding passages, has about it the air of the contrived. If friend Miller had asked him to contribute something about the "womb", and if Saroyan had unearthed a manuscript page about his mother and only added a list of vague and feeble, "poetic" images, then his contribution to the Booster would not have looked much different:

> The time before a man is born is a time of strange beauty and adventure for him, a time of love and trains going, of sorrow and remembrance of humor and the sudden appearance of new streets in a new place.... (B.iv.7)

Le Huitain, author of "Comment naissent les Poètes ou la chiquenaude manquée", aproached the "womb" theme in a manner reminiscent of Auntie Prudence's voyage down the arteries of the Minotaur. But instead of a post-mortem experience, it describes as a comical allegory the poet/narrator's existence before birth. Beginning at the beginning, at the spermatozoal state, he well anticipated the well-known episode in Woody Allen's film What You Always Wanted to Know About Sex by describing how he and his poor comrades are roughly shaken up and down in a piston-like motion until finally in a mad jumble and rush "notre gigantesque troupeau cynique" was unhappily forced outside into "un

des états les plus précaires de l'exil" (B.iv.8). All this occured with such force and wildness that he lost consciousness. Waking up he found that he had turned into a growing body, "un terrain" under a vast tree. His heart begins to beat, louder and louder, his limbs grow, desires awake. One day, of a sudden, the archangel Gabriel appears before him, announcing that he had come to teach him all there was to know. And so vast areas of knowledge and wisdom are opened to him, including the esoteric philosophies and all manner of occult concepts. For three seasons the embryonic narrator listens and learns, until one day he is informed of his imminent birth, a prospect he finds horrible and pervaded with an ugly hospital odour. Saying farewell Gabriel delivers a blow to the narrator's lip, a blow which was intended to make him forget everything he had learned: "mais je crois qu'il m'a raté..."(B.iv.13).

This humourous description of the poet's birth, a stimulating mixture of comedy and esoteric lore, of typically romantic notions of the artist's singular role and preordained access to hidden realms, the view that metaphysical domains exist before and above the world of "néosàvoir" (B.iv.13), the important linking of the womb-condition and exile, all this and more increase the likelihood that Le Huitain's pseudonym masked someone who belonged to the inner circle of the Villa Seurat, someone closer to the Boosters than Saroyan to be sure. In fact, it seems very probable that Le Huitain, who also contributed to the second Booster a "Lettre poétique" (B.ii.42) was no other than David Edgar, the good friend of Perlès, Miller and Durrell. Edgar was also the Booster's publicity manager. He was said to have "discovered" Le Huitain (B.iv.48). There is in fact no contribution to the Booster by David Edgar under his own name, although he did write as is evinced in the unpublished Booster Broadside entitled "The Neurotic at Home and Abroad". The strong esoteric flavour of "Comment naissent les Poètes" and of Gabriel's elucidations also support the assumption that Edgar was its author, for he and his friends would spend nights, as Perlès recalled

in speculative talk on life, after-life, post-after-life, the Lemurian age, Atlantis, the meaning of myths and legends, occult powers and principalities, the relative spheres of influence of Lucifer, Ahriman, Life in Devachan, and so on and so forth. (MFHM.136)

Edgar was also mentioned in a Hamlet letter to Fraenkel. Miller said that as contributors to the "womb"-number, Durrell and Edgar had developed "a whole new language about the womb. Look for the Christmas number of the Booster, which will be entirely dedicated to the WOMB!" (Hamlet 268). And in Fraenkel's direction Miller added: "They seem to have gone a step beyond the master..."(ibid.). Fraenkel responded with disdain: "It all seems to me like old stuff"(Hamlet 302). If David Edgar was indeed Le Huitain, the Air-Conditioned Womb Number can be considered (along with the Dismemberment Delta) the purest expression of the Miller circle in the last three years before the war. Saroyan was the only outsider.

The last contribution to the Booster was also the most problematical. Miller's "The Enormous Womb" was a fairly extensive statement of the acceptance outlook which, as we have noted, animated the Booster editorials(3). Many of the familiar elements and ornaments of the changeable conglomerate were paraded here; indeed, much of the argument of "The Enormous Womb" has been covered in the above chapter on the editorials. It seems important enough, however, to merit a certain repetition. For far too long, said Miller, man has regarded life on earth as a struggle, as torture and as pain. At the same time he has believed both death and the time before birth to be states of harmony and bliss. This attitude bespoke a fear of life, caused by the Rankian birth trauma. But, said Miller, as the case of some enlightened individuals showed, a life free of anxiety was possible. Significantly, in mythological accounts, such 'heroes' had been born 'supernaturally'. They were thus "spared the shock of birth" (B.iv.20). There was no cesura in their existence. For the 'normal' human being, it was also possible to experience life "as art and not as ordeal", if following the example of the hero who "acts as if he were at home in the world" (B.iv.21), the world was accepted in the same way as the embryo accepted the womb. "The world becomes interesting and livable only when we accept it in toto with eyes open, only when we live it out as the foetus lives out its uterine life"

(B.iv.23). The way to acceptance was to learn "the equilibrist's art", to learn to expand one's consciousness and "to embrace the apparently conflicting opposites"(B.iv.22). The final objective was to believe absolutely everything. "I believe everything", Miller wrote (B.iv.23). Believing everything and accepting the world as the "womb of all, of birth and of life and of death" also meant living exclusively in the present. "The best world is that which is now this very moment" (B.iv.23). It was not some Marxist future, some spiritual Beyond, some condition free of anxiety which psychoanalysis promises. To live for the future, any future, was fatal, but this was what most people did. For them heaven would be "always just around the corner.. To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow..."(B.iv.24).

Clearly, one of the more direct influences was Otto Rank. For a time at least Rank, as we have noted, believed that if one allowed the patient "to repeat and to understand the birth trauma" (ORTB.213f), he might be finally cured of neurosis. In the same way Miller's plea was for man to get born into "the world-as-is" (B.iv.23). It was a call for mankind to experience (as the circular had predicted for the Booster) "a re-birth, the painless, non-traumatic variety presaged by Otto Rank" (IntHML.iv.21), a re-birth into the enormous womb which was the world. But apart from Rank, Miller drew on numerous sources as well. As is well known the notion of Nirvana or Mocsha, the belief that the enlightened may step out of, be freed of the recurring circle of life, death and rebirth, has a central role in Buddhism and Hinduism. These ideas echo in some passages of Miller's essay. At one point, for instance, Miller wrote that "the only possible escape from the womb" was to stand still which "would mean becoming God", and "God" - according to this interpretation - was "summation, which is the same as saying cessation. God does not represent life, but fulfillment" (B.iv.22). In parentheses, it is almost needless to say that the essay's peroration underlined that "in the midst of this crazy treadmill" (the world), Miller would stand still: "Stock still" (B.iv.24). But to return to the ideas and attitudes which fed into "The Enormous Womb". There might have existed some similarity between the Upanishad concept of Atman, the belief that God is not extraneous but in man himself, and Miller's 'God', the "absolute of selfhood" which Charles Glicksberg made out (Glicksberg 129). But Miller was no

Hindu, and, despite his growing admiration for Zen, he was no Buddhist either. As so often, he employed ideas and stimuli according to his whim, re-moulded them, even turned them on their heads, in order to support his impressionistic line of argument. Both Hindus and Buddhists, for instance, hold that all earthly existence is suffering, pain and toil, and that the outer world of time and space is an unimportant if nasty illusion. The Hindus call this outer world Maya. Henry Miller, on the other hand, was all for that world and for no other. Without the slightest scruple he seized the term Maya, emptied it of the negative implications and filled it to the brim with (for him) positive associations. The outer world itself, even if it was an 'illusion', was the antidote to fear, the key. "MAYA. Illusion is the antidote to fear". To accept MAYA, the world of time and space, this temporal world, meant overcoming the fear which paralysed and kept one from true life.

There is no need to trace all the other stimuli which Miller drew on here in his own thoroughly eclectic manner. A far more interesting phenomenon is Miller's attempt at philosophising itself, not so much what he said, in other words, but why he felt called upon to expound on his world view. We are concerned here with Miller the 'cosmologist', the 'thinker'.

We have earlier pointed out how in the course of time Miller's bohemian attitudes had expanded and become encrusted with manifold psychological and quasi-religious ornament. For this development "The Enormous Womb" would be a case in point. We have also touched upon some of the reasons why from very early on Miller the novelist journeyed into the realm of the 'idea' and wrote about his experiences. Anais Nin's view, for example, was cited that he was attempting to escape her judgement by going into that "male" world of "grandiloquence and gigantism,... enormity and massive constructions, imposing ideas, philosophic systems"(AN.i.334). But that explanation seems to us inadequate. A more promising approach was offered by Kingsley Widmer who pointed out the American roots of Miller's 'ideology':

In Miller, the confessional strain crosses, though not for the first time, with the vast sub-literature of homemade metaphysics and millenial exhortation which we find in the native radicalism of nineteenth-century American utopians, and in its predecessors, the antinomian tracts of seventeenth-century English Protestantism. (3Dec.114)

In the context of the Booster, however, the relation between Miller the 'philosopher' and Miller the comic realist and autobiographer needs further investigation.

There have been critics who felt that Miller's work was of intrinsic merit because he wrote familiarly about his own particular environment and his own circle of vision. The power of his writing was traced to the fact that he wrote in the way the man on the streets spoke. George Orwell, in particular, thought that the voice of Miller was the voice of the 'common man' and that it sounded true. He forgave Miller's occasional flights into the Mickey Mouse universe of the surrealists because of his usual proximity to the language and the experience of the 'common man'. Of course, said Orwell, Miller's 'common man' was "neither the manual worker nor the suburban householder" but a Paris-American bum; nevertheless, "the experiences of this type overlap fairly widely with those of more normal people"(CE.i.550). What is curious, however, is that in his numerous pre-war comments on Miller, Orwell said very little about articles such as "The Enormous Womb" with their nebulous speculation, diffuse rhetoric and tottering 'philosophical' constructions. Orwell did mention in the 1939 "Inside the Whale" an attack by Miller on American civilisation from Max and the White Phagocytes. But by saying no more about this than that it came "from the usual angle of the literary man who hates industrialism" (CE.i.548), he blocked an important road to the understanding of Miller. Basically the relation was not touched upon, let alone analysed in its political implications, between Miller the successful realist and Miller the pontificating "cornball literary saint" (3Dec.113). The two aspects were nowhere brought together, the former aspect praised, the latter regarded as an embarrassing and unnecessary appendage. The question is, of course, whether there existed any noteworthy link between the two at all.

We have said that it is generally agreed that Miller's work convinced if and when it was nourished from experiences in the 'real' world. Indeed, not only in the view of David Gascoyne, Cancer and Black Spring were "the products of a life spent at the heart of the modern world,... in constant contact with its horror and its misery" (Comment.ii.39.88). The contact was with the horrors and frustrations of the street and Orwell rightly pointed out that often Miller was "able to get nearer to the ordinary man than is possible to more purposive writers" (CE.i.548). Why? Because Miller himself came from the streets.

More precise, however, than Orwell's term "ordinary man" was the term proposed by Kenneth Rexroth to place Miller sociologically. He called Miller a "Surplus Man". In his books Miller described this class of "the literate dispossessed, the underemployed of the clerkly caste which is our society's principle kind of overproduction" (Cont.Nov.958). Miller spoke for the Surplus Man, Miller was a Surplus Man.

According to Rexroth, a central aspect of the experience of the Surplus Man, for the dispossessed and alientated clerk was that "the values, the achievements, and the classics of the dominant civilisation are meaningless and absurd" (ibid.). Concomitant to the experience of alienation, as we have had occasion to show, a need was often felt for a new order of meaning, a new integrated world view. We have spoken in the very first chapter of this thesis about the tendency of Miller and Durrell to create for themselves a new one-man cosmology somewhere far away from their original cultural context. We must now add that these ostensibly private cosmologies were apparently not that private at all but a part of a wider socio-cultural phenomenon, and that there existed among like-minded an audience for such 'philosophical' designs, that readership for "the vast sub-literature of homemade metaphysics and millenial exhortation". Miller, the Surplus Man, not only populated his books with colourful specimens of that half-educated lower middle class unemployed, in his cosmological essays he also spoke to them. Miller's mystical and philosophical work has been described as "of the wholesale kind" (3Dec.29). That was most accurate. Despite his being praised by thoroughbred occultists

like Moricand and Keyserling his rambling exhortations belonged to that murky sub-literary sphere which Kingsley Amis described above. We will come to the political implications presently; the point here is, that if in Cancer, Black Spring and various stories and narrative pieces Miller described his life at the lumpenproletarian fringe of American society, "The Enormous Womb", many of the Hamlet letters and other discursive essays were gestures against the meaninglessness and absurdity of that existence. If, as we believe, these mythopoeic attempts are really an integral part of the Surplus Man's experience, a direct response to his condition of alienation, then Miller's tendency to 'philosophise' was not a mere by-product of his art but perhaps closely related to his life and experience, a more immediate expression of his world of ideas than the realistic renderings of his experience in the 'real' world in novels and stories.

Unlike his commentators, Miller had no difficulties combining the two sides, the cosmological and the realistic. From his angle of vision there was nothing incongruous about insisting in one of his haziest 'philosophical' harangues that "I realized that I should have to content myself with what was in my grasp, my scope, my personal ken" (CosE.157f). Cosmological flights were just as much in his scope and personal ken as were 'real' experiences in the world outside.

There were problems involved. His philosophising tended to claim for itself an authority that was not at all inferior to that of the renderings of his experiences in the real world. Sometimes it slopped over into the 'real' world in a most questionable way. The hair-raising lines from the womb essay - "If war were really as terrible as people imagine it to be it would have been wiped out long ago" (B.iv.21) - show even more clearly than Auden's words "necessary murder" (which so angered Orwell) that here was a man who often had no more than an idea of his subject matter, but who still felt entitled to speak about it with authority. Of course, unlike other romantic-mystical celebrators of the war-experience (his correspondent Ernst Jünger, for instance), Miller had never seen and never wanted to get closer to the unspeakable horror of war. But war was an idea and as an idea it was within his 'personal ken' and so he could speak about it with certainty, another topic on which the irresponsible speculator

might exercise his rhetoric, another component part for his private cultural edifice. We have already remarked on this tendency to see events and tragedies in the outside world as material for their works of art in the chapter on the Booster editorials. In "The Enormous Womb" these materials were employed to buttress his ideological construction: "The cannons belong, like everything else. Everything belongs" (B.iv.24).

We need hardly remark in this context that what Orwell said of British intellectuals applied to the Boosters with a vengeance: "The war-mongering to which the English intelligentsia gave themselves up in the period 1935-9 was largely based on a sense of personal immunity" (CE.i.566). In the next chapter we will attempt to explain why for such a long time Orwell insisted on praising Miller for being in touch with his subject matter and why he ignored the many notoriously irresponsible statements by the American and his Booster colleagues, why he passed over the petit-bourgeois attitude which Miller often enunciated, all the while complaining loudly that "much of left-wing thought is a kind of playing with fire by people who don't even know that fire is hot" (CE.i.566). Unlike Auden and his friends, the Boosters had not even made the effort to 'journey to a war'...

"The Enormous Womb" was eloquent of another combustible subject which the Villa Seurat handled playfully and irresponsibly. Emanating from an almost exclusive focus on the individual was the obsession with the figure of an all powerful hero which we have referred to in our analysis of the Booster editorials. Contrary to the assertions that the Boosters were "non-political", the world-as-womb idea, as we have seen, opened the doors not only to all sorts of religious and meta-physical halls but to the political world as well, and contrary to their pronouncements that they were "non-contemporary", the obsession with the 'hero' at least was a phenomenon very much in vogue at the time.

In the discussion of the editorials we have mentioned some of the influences which fed into this romantic cult of genius. The real man, the genuine artist, the uncompromising individual, Miller and his friends proclaimed, stood in eternal opposition to the impotent and

sheepish masses of mankind. He was of a different species altogether, well above the timid morality of the rest of the human race as well. As examples "The Enormous Womb" mentioned Christ and Buddha and Napoleon and Tamerlane, but Miller admired the extraordinary individual no matter where he stood or what he did. The fact that Miller mentioned Christ and Tamerlane in one breath speaks volumes. He celebrated in his writings these 'exemplars' who would shock the world and awaken it from its fear of life and inertia. In a long and powerful passage from Cancer, for instance, Miller said:

> Side by side with the human race there runs another race of beings, the inhuman ones, the race of artists who, goaded by unknown impulses, take the lifeless mass of humanity and by the fever and ferment with which they imbue it turn this soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song. (Cancer 256)

Passages like this abound. Miller's race of artists was never restricted to that of the arts in the narrower sense. He sang of the individual who stood apart: "we have not yet bred any real traitors, traitors to the human race, which is what we need" (4). Among the tribe of traitors the unusual political figure was not absent, on the contrary. Miller's aversion to the 'lifeless' mass of humanity, the "world of cagey bastards, of pussy-footers, and stinking hypocrites" (Corr.107) went hand in hand with an admiration for contemporary men of action as well, even for the single-minded dynamism which caesarian political leaders like Hitler and Mussolini were felt to embody:

> The man who decides to live his own life is without fear; he lives positively, not negatively. That is why men like Hitler and Mussolini, who are one with their destiny , move with lightning-like rapidity and assurance. (WoH.87)

This is not the only such passage in his pre-war writings. In his praise of the superior individual, who is always "a sort of monster" as he said in "The Enormous Womb"(B.iv.20), it was perhaps inevitable that Miller's oratory occasionally approximated that of the exponents of the right-wing mystique of leadership:

From millions of men ...one must step forward...who with apodictic force will form granite principles from the wavering idea-world of the broad masses... The world then resists and does not want to believe that the type which apparently is identical with it, is suddenly a very different being.

Once in a thousand years or so a man arises who is not a louse... When a MAN appears he seems to get a stranglehold on the world which it takes centuries to break. The sane people are cunning enough to call these men 'psychopathic'.

The strong men, the masters, regain the pure conscience of a beast of prey; monsters filled with joy, they can return from a fearful succession of murder, arson, rape and torture with the same joy in their hearts, the same contentment in their souls as if they had indulged in some student's rag.

Perhaps it is unjust to place a quotation from Miller's "Peace! It's Wonderful!" before one from Nietzsche and behind another from Mein Kampf (5). But the analogies are disquieting. Miller's biographer Jay Martin has written: "Henry's political position was a mélange of pre-World War One anarchism" (Martin 307). But was this really enough? Was it an unhappy coincidence that so many of the contemporary writers he admired were political reactionaries of the first order? Was it only a coincidence that the admired Oswald Spengler, echoes of whom pervade Miller's work, welcomed enthusiastically in Jahre der Entscheidung the advent of the "national revolution" of 1933? Was it a coincidence that Miller thought highly of Wyndham Lewis, author of a praising book on Hitler, "as a permanent enemy of the people" (Corr.30), that he corresponded with Count Keyserling who celebrated Hitler's ascent to power with mystical laudations? Keyserling, who "scorned logic and rational thought" and said that any sort of human advance would only be achieved through non-intellectual irrational forces, regarded fascism as a "new aristrocratic order" (Harrison 20). Was it pure chance that Miller admired the rabid anti-semite Céline, Hamsun, and Gottfried Benn, who also publically welcomed the Nazi rise to power, that he cherished C.G.Jung, who, as is often forgotten, became a member and later even the chairman of the Nazi Deutsche Allgemeine Gesellschaft für Therapie, and, even though he was a Swiss, edited its journal clothing clearly anti-semitic tendencies in scholarly and mythical terminology? Was it no more than a coincidence that one of the prime influences on Miller, D.H. Lawrence, was said by Orwell to have been the kind of man who might have found

himself supporting the Nazis had he lived in 1939 (Harrison 196)?

In our opinion, Miller's writings should not be considered in the same light as that more directly partisan work of reactionary poets such as Ezra Pound or Roy Campbell or Drieu la Rochelle. Miller did not take sides overtly, he did not step down into the political arena as unambivalently as these and other writers of the time. Still, it is simply no tenable position to emphasise Miller's anarchic streak and his roots in some American tradition, and to ignore the all too frequent and all too striking parallels with the reactionary thinkers and writers of the time. For reading through John Harrison's The Reactionaries, a study of the politics of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, Lawrence and Lewis, for example, echoes of this or that of Miller's loud assertions crowd into one's mind. We have mentioned many of them before and the belief in the superior individual, in the artist-hero's innate right to lead and rule the fellah masses, a secret or open admiration of Hitler and Mussolini as charismatic leaders was only one. There was also that typical disgust with the liberal democracies and their humanist and egalitarian ideals, the hatred of mechanised forms of production, the celebration of action and violence, the vision of an apocalyptic and bloody ending of the despised modern world, a strong anti-rationalism, preoccupations with esoteric lore, with death and the occult, invocation of race and blood and intution. Of course, none of these elements, including anti-semitism as such, is individually co-terminous with either fascism or nazism; still, they share common roots, and their proliferation in the work of Miller poses dark questions. To say that he was an artist and that his romantic primitivism no more than an aesthetic position misses the point. Whether they wanted it or not, the Boosters operated within a political framework and one must remember that celebrations of spiritual aristocrats were not always as politically without consequence as those of Henry Miller. The role that was played by well-known writers like Spengler, Keyserling, Benn, Möller van der Brock and others in preparing the ground for the acceptance of the Nazi experiment in intellectual and semi-intellectual circles is familiar. Though Miller's anti-democratic diatribes remained without echo in America and England, this fact does not alter their questionable character. Indeed, as we have said before, one cannot but regard

many of the playful provocations of the Booster with different eyes once one has discerned in what neighbourhood the 'superior individuals' of the Villa Seurat had built their homes. Many of their seemingly innocent pronunciamenti suddenly appear in a more sinister light. Their insistence that they would "not print book reviews or criticism of any sort" (IntHML.iv.21), for example, was apparently no more than the harmless expression of a writers' conventional disregard for his critics. But among the many political echoes the Booster editorials conjured up, the anti-intellectual, anti-rational and anti-semitic agitation of Nazi art commentators comes to mind. As Susan Sontag has pointed out, a "principal accusation against the Jews within Nazi Germany was that they were urban, intellectual, bearers of a destructive 'critical spirit'". Art criticism was officially forbidden in Nazi Germany (Sontag 314f).

In 1940 Orwell said that Miller not only spoke like the 'common man' but shared his passivity, his non-political and non-moral outlook: "far from endeavouring to influence the future, he simply sits down and lets things happen to him" (CE.i.549). But was this really so? Was the 'ordinary man' in the turbulent 1930s in Europe really as politically indifferent and passive as Orwell contended? Perhaps in England he was. However, the tragedy of Weimar Germany shows that in times of acute crisis and upheaval even the 'non-political' ordinary man, the indifferent petit bourgeois, the Surplus Man, can be shaken and frightened and unsettled to an extent that for all his aversion to politics he is de facto politicised. He is politicised in spite of himself. Needless to say that Miller, too, was political in spite of himself. If it is true that Miller spoke to and for the Surplus Man, he also spoke to and for the politicised 'unpolitical' Surplus Man of the time. In "The Enormous Womb" and other articles like it Miller articulated not only cosmologically but politically as well the link with "the literate dispossessed, the underemployed of the clerkly class", with their petit bourgeois fantasies and phobias - and this even, or rather, especially, when he was celebrating the superior individual and spat on the masses...

Significantly, the drifter turned literary saint had quite a number of relatives in the period between the wars. Though it is tempting to do so, we will refrain from juxtaposing again some of his more extreme assertions with those of another one-time lumpenproletarian, that deracinated painter of post-cards who considered himself an artist his whole life long, whose will to power and to politics however was endlessly stronger. It is revealing that Miller was one of the comparatively few who read Mein Kampf. He occasionally quoted bits of it, "from the devil himself", as he said in the "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" (6). And it would be interesting to know precisely which parts he meant when he said of "the Reverend Hitler's magnum opus" to Fraenkel in April 1937: "Incidentally, there are some profound truths in it!"(Hamlet 264).

Still, we will take another, somewhat less delicate comparison. Millenial tendencies in the twentieth century were clearly no phenomena restricted to the American hemisphere. In The Thirties Malcolm Muggeridge described the need felt by many people in the uncertain years between the wars "to be told what they were trying to say". This desire was of course particularly strong in downtrodden Germany. In this context Muggeridge mentioned a "certain Muck Lamberty, who in 1921, wearing a blue cape, with great success preached his gospel of Glut ist Geist" and was "frequently hailed as a Messiah" (Muggeridge 252). The German historian Ulrich Linse has written a book on Lamberty and other 'barefoot prophets', thus the title, Barfüßige Propheten, who wandered through Germany in the unstable years after the First World War, telling people what they were trying to say, lecturing and preaching and holding meetings and collecting disciples, even establishing communes. The most prominent of these, Ludwig Christian Haeusser, Friedrich Muck-Lamberty and Max Schulze-Sölde, achieved a certain notoriety during the inflation period. Hauesser even ran for president in 1924. They belonged to the subculture of the Weimar Republic; they belonged to the Surplus Men of their time, as alienated from the dominant culture as Miller's New York acquaintances and the Parisian drifters and renegades a decade later, and they spoke for them. Itinerant apostles of a confused political religiousness, often genuine lunatics, sometimes charlatans, sometimes radical utopians with a folkloristic streak, they were generally well received by

audiences throughout Germany, men and women whose spiritual and material foundations had been deeply shaken by the war and inflation. It was to packed auditoriums not only of petit bourgeois that they spoke. There were links to the Dadaists, to Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophist circles, to the Bauhaus in Weimar, where Hauesser once lectured. In their own typically monomaniacal way, each of these self-elected Messiahs railed against the bourgeois system, against democracy and civilisation, against the politicians and church religion, against materialism and the modern world in general, proposing all sorts of weird remedies for society's general malaise. Frequently calling for the rebirth of a greater Germany, not all these remedies were as harmless as folk-dancing, vegetarianism, and the "rehabilitation of the sexual organ". This "liberation", which would have been applauded by the Boosters, was generously put into practice on their swooning hypnotised female followers, especially by Hauesser who, incidentally, made a special point of hurling obscene insults at his listeners. One point that comes through very clearly, however, is that the monstrous cult of the ego, the absolute certainty believed to be in the "I" of the apostle, answered to a deep need of an audience which felt lost, abandoned in the midst of an impersonal and meaningless material and spiritual chaos. Barfüßige Propheten describes a particular German variant of a phenomenon which must have emerged in most Western countries in the troubled years between the wars. In Germany this longing for leadership and certainty continued without interruption until another "superior individual" arrived to satisfy it in the late 1920s and beyond.

It is not necessary to point out the parallels between Miller and these fellow prophets: it is a remarkable fact, however, that the literary reputation of "Happy Rock" Henry Miller, whose self-assured posture had remained unshaken (at least in his writings) by the distressing course of public events in the late 1930s seems to have reached a first climax in the uneasy and anxious months which followed the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938. We will return to this later.

Again, the world-as-womb position of Miller and friends was not as cheerfully innocent as one is sometimes led to believe. However, it must be said that crucial elements of right-wing thought never appeared in the Villa Seurat writing. There is no nationalism of any kind, no trace of militarism, of the belief in the racial superiority of the Nordic type, of the stress on order and authority and stable social hierarchies, etc... Much rebelled in them against regimentation and collectivism, against the absolute power of an authoritarian state, against mass-organisations, political parties or movements, against politics in a narrow sense as such. Still, in our opinion, this does not alter the fact that many of their propositions were ultimately most questionable and even dangerous. Criticism of the practical realities of fascism did not rule out a common ideological direction. One might recall that Spengler, whose writings had helped destroy the Weimar democracy, later criticised the Nazi movement for being too plebian...

David Gascoyne told Djuna Barnes that Miller "always talks as though he hates the Jews" (DG.ii.106). But Miller's anti-semitism, however objectionable, was neither raucous nor fanatical, more the voicing of a latent socio-cultural prejudice which was fairly ubiquitous in the Western world at the time - "As a boy I never thought of a Jew as being anything but unclean, lousy, et cetera"(Hamlet 265). Though Miller declaimed unashamedly about all kinds of alleged differences between 'Gentiles' and 'Jews', one might say that he did so at a time when such presposterous speculation was regarded as more 'acceptable' than it is today.

> I would have grown up to be like every other American Jew-hater had it not been for the fact that I was a bit of a queer egg myself. I discovered soon enough another fact about myself - that I was different not only from the Jews about me but from the other Gentiles. In fact the difference between me and the other Gentiles was more threatening than the difference between me and the Jews, so it seemed at the time. ... I began to make allies of my Jew acquaintances. I began, in short, to cultivate them. (Hamlet 265)

Like the Nietzsche of Ecce Homo, Miller had no high opinion of the Germanic peoples. His opinion of the Jews was in fact far better than of his Protestant relatives. Indeed, Miller wrote to Fraenkel, it was to his Jewish friends that he owed his "initiation into the arts" (ibid). And he added: "The whole cultural pattern came to me via the Jews, as happens in many places throughout the world, wherever the soil is sterile or the people 'backward'"(ibid.).

Still, the analogies with a right-wing anti-egalitarianism remain, and although Miller's 'racism' was not based on the pseudo-biological categories which fascist and proto-fascist theoreticians like Alfred Rosenberg, Houston Stuart Chamberlain and Count Gobineau drew on, in the last resort his distinction between "the human race" and "the inhuman ones, the race of artists" (Cancer 256) was as distant from ethics based on Christian ideas or humanist ones and as prone to abuse as were those of Spengler and other reactionaries who lent their pen to the fascist experiment. Though it may seem so, we are not interested in what Orwell called "orthodoxy sniffing". We do not feel called upon to pass political judgement on Miller and his writings. Nevertheless, we would like to re-emphasise that Miller was neither 'a-political' nor only an exponent of a Whitmanesque anarchism. For us the analogies with anti-humanist body of thought are striking, and we would like to know who can still view Miller's weakness for oriental philosophy with pristine eyes after having read that another Surplus Man of the time, another petit bourgeois with a penchant both for the irrational and mystical and for violent 'solutions', was the ex-schoolteacher Heinrich Himmler, an amateur of theosophic lore, of Indian religious works such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Veda and Rig-Veda, and even the sayings of Buddha(7)?

To place the 'cosmology' of Miller in a political context then is problematical and we will have to return to this question. At the moment, however, a quotation of George Orwell comes to mind. In 1939/40 he said of T.S.Eliot, that he "has remained aloof, but if forced at the pistol's point to choose between Fascism and some more democratic form of Socialism, would probably choose Fascism" (CE.i.558). Though this is hardly a fair way of settling the question, if forced at pistol's point to decide what Miller's choice would have

been, we must say that it is not at all easy to imagine that he would have opted for a democratic socialism. What is all the more surprising, however, is that of the important commentators on Miller and on the Villa Seurat review in that highly politicised literary climate of the late 1930s, not one, it seems, took to task an article like "The Enormous Womb" and struck it down (with more justice than in other cases) using that all too current critical stick, "crypto-fascist stuff"....

Notes

1. AN.ii.267,322.
2. AN.ii.322. This happened in 1937, not in 1938.
3. The collection of essays entitled The Wisdom of the Heart was originally going to be have the same title as Miller's contribution to The Air-Conditioned Womb Number (Martin.369).
4. Seven.iii.21; Hamlet 82.
5. Shirer 144,146.
6. CosE.152,160.
7. See the following essay on the creed of the SS. John M. Steiner. "Über das Glaubensbekenntnis der SS".

VIII. Contemporary Reactions to the Booster.

How did the contemporary reader react to the Booster? Record of pre-war opinion on the Villa Seurat magazine is scarce. Later, as the Miller legend grew, people occasionally remembered the magazine, old acquaintances like Cyril Connolly, who in 1964 called the Booster venture "one of the few good jokes of the Thirties"(CCEC.424). But although the editor of Horizon probably numbered amongst its earliest readers - he was also one of the first to 'discover' Miller -, his praise of the Booster was retrospective and posthumous. Such appreciations are of interest, of course; immediate reactions to the review, however, are probably more revealing, freer at any rate of the sentimental 'mythical' aura which pervades many reminiscences of this period. Contemporary reactions are important not only because they influenced the Villa Seurat's deliberations on the magazine's future, but also because they are eloquent of the literary and critical atmosphere of the time.

There will be two sub-sections included in this chapter. The first is about Orwell on Miller; as has been remarked earlier George Orwell strove to explain the work and attitudes of Henry Miller in a number of articles over the years. He produced the longest contemporary review of the Booster. This article has its place in the changing pattern of Orwell's attitude to the American over the years, a pattern which will be scrutinised. Second, in passing the Criterion's influential periodical reviewer, Hugh Gordon Porteus, once compared the Booster with a seemingly similar, short lived little magazine of the early 1930s entitled Dope. We shall enlarge upon this comparison.

The Booster's readership can be divided into three groups: the original readers, who were the members of the American Country Club of France, then the Villa Seurat insiders, their friends and admirers, and finally the readers of little magazines in general, a broader group of those actively interested in modern literature. In this chapter we shall be concerned with the latter group.

What, one may ask, did interested contemporaries have to say, those not acquainted with the Villa Seurat, but familiar with the literary currents of the time? What did the critics think, those engaged in the daily traffic of letters, or, more specifically of periodicals and avant-garde reviews? Not much. Miller's network of literary acquaintances was vigorously pressed into to service, the Booster's advertising drum beaten with passion, but the echo was minimal. The reasons for this virtual silence need to be investigated.

It is true that the Villa Seurat had announced: "We do not intend to make a "success" out of the Booster"(IntHML.vi.22). And they succeeded more easily than they had perhaps hoped for. If "success" is taken to mean commercial achievement and/or critical attention, if not enthusiasm, the Booster was apparently a failure. Financially it was a miscarriage, but that had been expected. What was far more aggravating, it was also largely ignored by printed critical opinion. Some notable exceptions will be discussed presently.

The Booster did not create a critical commotion. When Frederick Hoffman later wrote that it became "a riotous, reckless, provocative magazine of shock"(Hoffman 337) one cannot but wonder: a shock, a provocation when and for whom? The typical little magazine reader of the day may have found the Booster an irritation, he may have been perplexed - but he was not shocked. At least there is no record of a shocked reaction (aside from the Country Club members). Later on, with the Dismemberment Delta's explicit obscenity, things were different. As far as the Booster was concerned, it is characteristic that the notorious "Nukarpiartekak" was no more than a reprint from the semi-surrealist Contemporary Poetry and Prose which had folded in Autumn 1937.

In spite of all the time and care they invested, Miller and Durrell always insisted that what really mattered was the fun involved. The warm élan of the period can indeed still be felt in contemporary sources. Still, this did not alter the fact that the Booster aroused little interest, as was borne out by the acute lack of sales. Along with other pamphlets, copies of the review soon piled up in Miller's cupboard, or were given away. Even then, said Anais Nin, "very few

people liked them" (AN.ii.325). For Miller, waiting for "success" was annoying but not out of the ordinary. In fact, brochures gratis were an integral part of his self-promotion. "How strange this ... when in Paris, disgusted with the slowness of sales on that little opus," Miller wrote later about Aller Retour New York, "I began giving them away - even to strangers. Would sit down and think up names - like Andŕe Gide or Paul Morand, and send them out" (IntHML.iv.17). In all liklihood copies of the Booster made their unsolicited appearance on the desks of prominent writers as well, but still, the critical echo was faint, almost imperceptible.

Although the Delta editors later claimed the Booster had "created attention in Europe and America"(1), "attention" was fleeting, a flare-up, no more. In the little magazine arena, where blows were usually exchanged with liveliness and passion, the Booster's name was scarcely mentioned. One might have expected some of the more combative reviews to remark on the sheet from Paris. Indeed, eccentricity gave no exemption from vigorous criticism, as the well beaten Phoenix discovered. A number of London magazines blasted this Woodstock periodical, whose European editor lived in the Villa Seurat 18. Much to the dismay of the editors, it would seem, the Booster passed more or less unscathed. Controversy and notoriety, paths to renown, were barred for the Villa Seurat review. Later, in 1939, there were some New Verse attacks in the very general direction of a "new crop of loony and eccentric small magazines in England and America" (NV.i.2.ns.49), but these did not even specifically mention the Booster.

In England and America, there was, as we have pointed out, a wide-spread, almost universal deprecation of the 'non-political' attitude. Even someone like Hugh Gordon Porteus of the conservative Criterion noted: "Those periodicals which acknowledge no policy at all, the neutral observer will incline to suspect"(Criterion xvii.69.764). Again, the 'non-political' Booster was not mentioned, let alone attacked.

T.S. Eliot's Criterion was one of the journals which published detailed little magazine reviews in every issue. But although Black Spring was reviewed in April 1937, although Miller's "Un Etre Etoilique" was issued in October, and although Eliot admired The Black Book and Cancer and had even promised to help with the Booster, the Villa Seurat review was not mentioned once.

It is true that the magazine had a circulation in England that was next to negligible (DTCL.274). But to assume that the Villa Seurat magazine was not known presumably misses the truth as well. A review of Money and How It Gets That Way, which was a Booster Broadside, began with the words: "The most eminent of the Boosters needs no boosting" (NEW.xiv.14.210). This clearly assumes a knowledge of the magazine's name in the reader. As a matter of fact, even that most influential of poetry editors, Geoffrey Grigson, must have heard of the Booster, as he quoted scoffingly a passage from Life and Letters Today, in which it was mentioned(NV.xxviii.15). If, however, the Booster was not unknown, and yet few writers commented on it, the question which again forces itself upon one is: why?

A reviewer may simply not have liked the Booster. He may not have believed its private jokes and obscurities worth bothering about. In early 1939, for example, Geoffrey Grigson explained why Dylan Thomas had not appeared in his poetry review for some time. New Verse, he said, was "bored with poems which everlastingly ennumerate psychopathic symptoms"(PC.lix.1.53). Was there any reason to print such expressions of "psychopathic exhibitionism"(ibid.) he suggested, or even to examine them again after what may be called representatively destructive criticism (such as on George Barker) in previous issues?

But, of course, there are other reasons for critical silence as well. As every editor or critic knows, even the most scathing critique is not half as destructive as a grim silence, a steadfast looking away, and no one knew this better than the most scathing critic of the day: Geoffrey Grigson. Grigson was renowned for his sharp intelligence and his even sharper tongue. His opinions also happened to be an aesthetic barometer for a whole generation of poets, and what he chose to ignore

was as important as what he selected for comment or publication. As Julian Symons later wrote: "His choice of poems showed by omission the kind of thing to be avoided"(JS30s.72). Although Grigson relished cutting yet often perceptive commentary, he clearly reserved this for more important targets, those which had escaped the cage of silence and anonymity. Invective was kept for poets like Robert Graves or Edith Sitwell ('the old jane'), or for magazines like Harriet Monroe's aging Poetry (the heading of Grigson's commentary: "WHY NOT DIE?"(NV.xxi.21)). Omission was a taste-forming policy, an effective wall of silence felt in particular by those outside the literary establisment...

No one could blame an editor for keeping out work he did not like, and Grigson could always retort, as he did in 1939, that he simply preferred "to print poems by the poets who seem to write better than other poets"(PC.lix.1.53). However, silence and omission were also instruments not only of aesthetic discrimination but of poetry politics as well, and in a literary age as political as the 1930s it was particularly difficult to escape confusing 'good' art with art that confirmed one's own political views. The work of the Villa Seurat was very much affected by this. It is true that there were some politically oriented critics who appreciated their writing. Miller, for instance, had begun corresponding with V.F.Calverton, one of America's leading Marxist critics, and Calverton told Miller that he was planning to write a book about his works (Martin 321). But in general, left-wing critics in America, Edmund Wilson has been quoted as saying,

> have ignored The Tropic of Cancer on the ground that it is merely a product of the decadent expatriate culture and can be of no interest to the socially minded and forward looking present. (SoL.705)

Is it entirely absurd to suppose that the Booster was also passed over in critical commentaries for similar reasons? A plea by Porteus is symptomatic. After having repeatedly reviewed the reactionary Right Review, he criticised the fact that other periodicals, in particular left-wing magazines, said nothing at all about Potocki's eccentric yet entertaining magazine: "What to say about the Right

Review I really do not know. I seem at the moment to be the only person willing to say anything at all. ... But considering how widely the Right Review is read, sub rosa, by the Left, someone else might review it from another angle"(Criterion xviii.70.170). It is by no means certain that the Villa Seurat review was read sub rosa by anyone at all, but the fact that very little was written about it does not necessarily imply, it would seem, that no one actually read it.

Like a insistent leitmotif, the complaint of being unfairly excluded and accusations of hypocrisy resound through the pages of numerous fringe little magazines of the later part of the decade. In a short and spiteful attack on New Verse entitled "Poetry Politics in London", another outsider, Derek Savage, who was Miller's successor as European editor of the Phoenix, deplored that: "There is a conspiracy to keep the individual out of poetry"(PC.liii.4.207), and to keep the individualist poet out of poetry magazines. Indeed, however simplistic and debatable this view, Savage expressed what many young poets (including Lawrence Durrell) had come to feel by the late 1930s. By then, New Verse, perhaps the most influential review of the decade, had lost much of its initial openness, sacrificing good poetry on the altar of its "increasingly doctrinal function"(FSAA.x). Although Grigson, H.B.Mallalieu and Julian Symons hastened to refute the un-informed and malicious Savage in the next issue of Poetry, it was undeniable that from very early on Grigson's initial view that "poetry is round and faces all ways"(NV.ii.1), that New Verse belonged "to no literary or politico-literary cabal"(NV.i.1f) had, in the eyes of Savage and likeminded, only the slightest claim to truth. In point of fact, whatever Grigson's intentions at the outset, "New Verse was political, left-wing, and propagandist from its beginning, because the writers whom Grigson admired and wanted to publish were political" (Hynes 116). Indeed, for a very long time, there were no others: "The will to be wide-ranging was there, but the wide range wasn't"(Hynes 115).

Julian Symons, editor of Twentieth Century Verse, later noted: "What we saw during the Thirties was an attempt to deny utterly the validity of individual knowledge and observation"(JS30s.125). He may and he may not have had his friend Grigson in mind. Still, one does find in New Verse examples of this tendency to insist forcibly on the 'proper'

political attitudes. For example, according to Grigson, it was in the later part of the decade an editor's moral duty to exclude and suppress what was politically unacceptable. Samuel Hynes pointed out that: "To Grigson's credit he kept New Verse as various as he could; and he raised his voice in that noisy decade, against bad art"(Hynes 117). He also raised his voice against art that aspired to political neutrality or indifference. Reviewing in March 1938 the essays of Yeats, as well as A Vision, Grigson explained what he considered to be the duties of a poet:

> To be free as a poet, to be free and to be allowed to have Reality in view, enjoins upon us, that, as clearly as we can with our imperfections of reason and sensibility, we must recognize, and not evade, realities of the present. (NV.xxix.22)

In these terms and in Grigson's definition of reality, Yeats had clearly evaded the "realities of the present", and therefore, said the editor of the most important London poetry review of the day: "We have no right to listen to Yeats, no right at least to stay outside" (ibid.).

As a poet Yeats was universally admired, even by Grigson himself. That explains New Verse's slight retraction in the above injunction. As far as the ordinary "escapist" and evader of realities was concerned, New Verse showed less scruple, blasting away at the proponents of "poetic isolation" with increasing zeal. In a double number entitled COMMITMENTS which appeared in the crisis months of 1938 and incidentally, signalled Auden's retreat from a more overtly political art, Grigson hit out at the non-committed, declaring categorically: "he has no right to exist and no claim to be tolerated and need expect no good man to listen to him"(NV.xxxi/xxxii.2). Perhaps one should repeat this: he has no right to exist. Poetry had long ago lost its roundness as Grigson settled scores with poets such as Edith Sitwell, the Mallorcan Robert Graves and Delta contributor Ronald Bottrall and with others existing without justification "in Italian towns, on islands (until war rudely turns them out on British cruisers), and in vestries among the camphor and the offertory bags"(ibid.2). His attack on Laura Riding is symptomatic: "She is dead because she is neutral"(2).

Returning then to the question why the Booster was not reviewed or criticised in magazines such as New Verse, one might suggest that Grigson's swift destruction of such representative figures as the above-mentioned may have made it superfluous for him to cut off every sprouting head of the non-committal Hydra. It must have seemed to him neither necessary nor morally "right" to bring to public notice via criticism a métèque, expatriate review which so unabashedly proclaimed its indifference to politics and mocked the committed poet...

Things were more complex still. When Lawrence Durrell was in London again around Christmas 1937 he saw that people did not understand. Neither the Booster's purely comical side nor its serious aspects were appreciated. "The general opinion about The Booster in London is that it has fallen between two stools", Durrell wrote to Miller: "The clowning is regarded with distaste, and the serious part of it is so snow-balled in mysteries that people excuse themselves hurriedly and make a wry mouth"(Corr.119). There were exceptions, but Durrell was right when he laid stress on the reader's "bewilderment"(Corr.119). For what even the scattering of comments on the Booster had in common was this: a peculiar hesitancy of judgement.

There is among the published reactions to the Booster an almost tangible sense of irresolution, which finds its most notable expression, as we shall see, in an unsteadily ironic letter to the editor of the New English Weekly by George Orwell in November 1937 (NEW.xi.5.100). We will return to this exchange of opinions in the New English Weekly presently. The point is that a sense of not having understood would surely not have kept an experienced reviewer from decisive criticism. On the contrary, unnecessary subjectivity and darkness were the aesthetic bête noires of a whole generation of poets. "The world of objects is our constant discipline. Desert it, and you become the mouth under the short moustache on the last night of Nuremburg"(NV.xxxi/xxxii.16). Patently, the Booster had deserted the "objective" world Grigson had in view. Smothering in silence aside, why did nobody blast the Villa Seurat review as escapist, lunatic, perhaps even quasi-fascist, when similar reviews were (occasionally) berated with all available vigour? In October 1938

Porteus was to lash out at the Phoenix, saying that it was

> a simple-minded bogus-mystic hotchpotch affecting anti-politics and anti-intellectualism, which in spite of a stray bit of Miller or Nin hither and anon, does little credit to the memory of D.H.Lawrence, whose misunderstood genius apparently inspired it. Editorial comments reveal no sense of awareness of the contemporary situation, and no sense of responsibility. (Purpose.x.4.243)

Why did no one describe the Booster in similar terms? What made of the Villa Seurat review something of an enigma rather than a veritable sitting duck of the Phoenix variety? Presumably, the answer is, as Porteus' comment has already suggested, Henry Miller.

Miller's particular reputation made it difficult for a reviewer simply to push him into the corner of literary fanatics and preposterous gabblers of the Phoenix kind - where by rights some of his work belonged. "The only justified retreat is the loneliness from which everything and everybody is visible, the loneliness in the centre and not on the edge"(NV.xxxi/xxxii.2). These words from Grigson's attack on Yeats and the uncommitted seem almost hand-tailored for the author of Cancer, whom young David Gascoyne (about to join the CP) had called in 1936 one of the "remarkably few writers ... of whom it can be said that they write from the very bottom of their epoch and themselves"(Comment.ii.39.87). Who then can blame the literary journalist for his confusion and "wry mouth" when "the American Céline" (CCCP.118), as Connolly had called him, suddenly burst forth from the American Country Club organ as Henry Miller, Earl of Selvage, Fashion Editor and buffoonish explicator of the Podiatric Life? What was Miller doing "sitting on this rubbish heap" (Criterion.xvii.69.799) asked A.Desmond Hawkins of the Criterion referring to the Phoenix, a question eloquent of that pervasive mixture of admiration and bafflement, a question also bespeaking the inability to see that the author of Cancer and Black Spring felt very much at home on that rubbish heap, very much at ease in the company of Fraenkel and Anais Nin and his hero D.H.Lawrence. Who can blame the critic for failing to understand, to take in comprehensively all the various sides of Miller's literary character, aspects which so often seemed to contradict each other most violently?

But to return to the background against which the Boosters produced their little magazine, the background which magazines like New Verse in many ways epitomised. Samuel Hynes has said of New Verse that it "both recorded the changing consciousness of the decade and helped to change it by the judgements it made"(Hynes 114). Grigson was critical arbiter and creator of taste, but also, or rather concom.it antly, one of the period's symptomatic expressions. "There is no better guide to the literary tone of the 'thirties"(Hynes 117). If one wants to understand why the Booster was received in the way it was, one must take a closer look at the literary climate of the time, the literary Zeitgeist which New Verse helped to form. "To review the contents of any contemporary book or magazine", said Porteus at the time when the Booster first appeared, "without taking into account the nature of the atmosphere in which it is prepared and received, would be pointless" (Criterion.xvii.66.193). He also added with emphasis: "The atmosphere to-day is more highly charged with politics than it has been in this country for many a moon"(ibid.).

In an article entitled 'The Left Wing Orthodoxy' Stephen Spender said in Autumn 1938: "When Mr. Wyndham Lewis writes of the Left Wing orthodoxy of contemporary writers and intellectuals, none of them ... should quarrel with the description"(NV.xxxi/xxxii.12). More than a year before D.G.Bridson had said in a review of American periodicals in the Criterion: "If most of the avant garde intelligentsia may be said to have landslid leftwards ... the right was not without its diehards"(Criterion.xvi.64.399). The climate of little magazine opinion into which the Booster stumbled was highly political, charged in particular with anti-fascist, pro-soviet, popular front sentiment. Or to put it more polemically, it was charged with the insidious demand that everyone conform to "a leftish attitude"(Criterion.xvii.66.194), on pain of being "black-balled by 'all decent-thinking people'"(ibid.).

In The Auden Generation Samuel Hynes has comprehensively explained the development of political literature in England in the 1930s, its various stages, culmination and decline. He has also demonstrated how brittle any generalisation about this lively period will inevitably

be. Still, the Boosters did not hesitate to generalise and neither did the many other outsiders. Their view of the "left-wing orthodoxy" was often simplistic and strongly biased. It was also apparently in many ways justified.

From the beginnings of the literary decade Stephen Spender, clearly one of those on the "inside", recognised and described the dangers to literature which are intrinsic to any form of political orthodoxy. He had argued in his early "Poetry and Revolution" his belief (in Hynes's words) "that there is a deeper sense of political, beyond party politics, which is simply the truth about historic public issues, and which it is the artist's responsibility to reveal"(Hynes 105). In the years after the publication of New Country, Spender had grown ever more critical. In 1938 he would note, for instance, in an article referring to the discussions in the Writers' Association for Intellectual Liberty that "the competitiveness and snobbery of the writers as to who is most closely in contact with the working classes (who have become synonymous with Reality), amount to burlesque" (NV.xxxi/xxxii.13). The degree "to which belonging to the Left is becoming a career"(ibid.15) deeply disturbed him and he admitted that he was alarmed at his own success:

> If you want to have reviews taken by all but one of the weekly periodicals, if you want to have a book chosen by the Left Book Club, if you want to be looked at by the older generation of critics as a little Pink (just like they were in their youth), you had better be dressed in suitable opinions. (ibid.15)

To those outside, who were naturally alive to critical voices such as Spender's, the literary atmosphere held implications far more sinister than these words might suggest: suspicion, insult, fear, political censorship and black-listing were felt to be part of the literary racket. Wyndham Lewis has set up a minor monument to this in The Revenge for Love. Another striking example which cannot be left unmentioned concerned one of the few writers who showed an active and sympathetic interest in the author of Tropic of Cancer, later even linking his seminal analysis of the literary 1930s with a study of Miller. This was George Orwell.

Upon his return from Spain in the summer of 1937 (when the Villa Seurat was playfully assembling the first Booster), Orwell, who had witnessed the suppression of the P.O.U.M. and its militia in Barcelona and barely escaped arrest by communist police himself, found that very few people in England wanted to hear, let alone to print his account of what happened. The P.O.U.M. was generally denounced as 'Trotskyist' and thus 'objectively pro-fascist'. His old publisher, Victor Gollancz, declined to issue the projected book on Catalonia - before, it seems, he even read a line of it; the fact that Orwell had been "associated with the P.O.U.M. and Anarchists"(CE.i.312) was quite enough. Also, as Orwell said in a letter to Time and Tide in February 1938, "the pro-Communist censorship extends a great deal further than the Left Book Club" (ibid.332). Even the New Statesman, the paper his fellow Etonian Cyril Connolly wrote for, refused an article when it became clear it was to deal with the P.O.U.M.. A commissioned review on Franz Borkenau's The Spanish Cockpit was also rejected because it "'controverted editorial policy', or in other words blew the gaff on the Communist Party"(CE.i.314). Furthermore, after having printed what Orwell knew to be "appalling lies" about the P.O.U.M.(ibid.403) the New Statesman, like the News Chronicle, declined "to print any answers in their correspondence columns"(ibid.403) as well. Orwell wrote to his friend Rayner Heppenstall, it was "impossible to get a word about this mentioned in the English press"(ibid.312), a press which he believed either explicity communist (like the Daily Worker),"under direct Communist influence"(ibid.403) - or in the case of the right-wing papers more sympathetic to Stalinism (which Orwell had come to regard as wholly anti-revolutionary) than to any form of "Trotskyism" (ibid.403). It is difficult to underestimate how Orwell's imagination and his further work was affected by this "pro-Communist censorship"(CE.i.332). To his Spain book Orwell wanted to add an appendix about false reportage and suppression of information in British newspapers (ibid.314). If Catalonia strengthened his growing hostility to Stalinism, his subsequent experiences in England showed him how the media could deform and recreate "history" for partisan purposes.

Orwell was singularly aware of what Porteus put as follows: "it is important to understand how the prevailing political weather, in which the 'serious' periodicals are launched and sailed, has been manufactured day by day by the penny and tupenny press" (Criterion.xvii.66.194). And what is more, directly related to these realisations was the notion expressed in "Inside the Whale" that in the years 1935 to 1939 "the central stream of English literature was more or less directly under Communist control" (CE.i.562). Clearly in the latter part of the decade the political weather in the journalistic and in the literary world was wholly inimical to the P.O.U.M. fighter. It was also apparently antipathetic to any manifestation of the 'non-political' attitude.

We will presently return to discuss the peculiar relationship between Miller and his admirer malgré lui, George Orwell. At the moment, it is important to see that in the opinion and experience of very different writers an almost inpenetrable political "fug" had settled on literary London, so wide and "stifling and preposterous"(Criterion.xvii.66.194), that it was felt to be almost impossible to discuss with detachment, say, the relative virtues and shortcomings of writers like Ezra Pound and Roy Campbell, or one of the other "heretics of the Thirties, Wyndham Lewis, George Orwell, Robert Graves" (JS30s.123). As Samuel Hynes pointed out: "the language of political slogans and abuse, spread very widely into literary discussion, and into fiction and poetry as well"(Hynes 197). This was the atmospheric background of the Booster.

Attacks and abuse, accusations of literary fascism and Trotskyism echoed through many literary magazines, and even a publication as "committed" as New Verse was attacked by the communist Left Review for fostering a style, as Julian Symons later recalled, which being "based on careful observation and deliberately elegant choice of epithet!' (JS30s.73), was nothing less than "bourgeois objectivism" (ibid.). There were political hardliners, who ferociously accused Grigson's magazine of "becoming a cesspool of all that is rejected by the healthy organism of the revolutionary movement - a sort of miniature literature Trotskyism"(3). With mockery New Verse reprinted these denunciations, and yet a statement from the January 1938 number shows

that for all its individualism Grigson was not free of worries about its political reputation either: "We are not Trotskyists, but we should like to know more about the arrest of Boris Pasternak" (NV.xxviii.15). Then again, to ask such a question, albeit with hesitancy, shows that the distance between a paper like the Daily Worker and New Verse was immense. As a matter of fact, Grigson's observations on the unmentionable Wyndham Lewis (a friend) led the conservative Criterion to praise New Verse as singularly fortunate in its intelligent and responsible editorship (Criterion.xvii.68.593).

Nevertheless, Grigson's periodical would not have been the true reflection of its time, had it not also expressed its views on occasion in the irresponsible and imprecise political jargon of the day. Only a month prior to the Criterion's praise, Grigson had vituperatively described the left-wingers of the New Statesman, "Mortimer and that odd intelligent literary farceur, Mr. Connolly, indeed all the little State of Bloomsbury" as - quasi-fascist. The culture of these people, Grigson maintained, "is crypto-fascist, if anything ever was", adding severely: "It would flourish easily under a dictatorship"(NV.xxix.14). It is a peculiar irony that George Orwell noted in "Inside the Whale": "Mr Connolly belongs exactly to the generation of the writers of 'the movement', and with not many reservations their values are his values"(CE.i.566). And it is no wonder that Connolly later expressed his feelings about New Verse by saying that "some of the reviews were too personally spiteful" (CCEC.425).

Into this political rigamarole then, into the glaring vision of an audience in the unsympathetic habit of searching out and extrapolating political implications, hungry for symptoms of heresy, of "literary fascism", "literary Trotskyism", "literary reaction", etc, etc, a readership expecting conformity to its standards, strayed a carefree and joyously fatalistic Booster. It is little wonder that there was some confusion.

Our first example comes from the 1938 summer number of Life and Letters Today, then still a quarterly. A ten-page review of various little magazines was issued, one of the handful of articles that mentioned the Booster. Its author was Julian Symons, the influential editor of Twentieth Century Verse. As the poet Francis Scarfe pointed out in his Auden and After, Symons was an editor both discriminating and flexible, printing in his review a very wide range of poets. These reached from New Verse regulars all the way to Nicholas Moore and Dylan Thomas. The latter's "January 1939" which first appeared here in February of that year was in fact reprinted in Durrell's second poetry Delta. Symons published some poetry which the Villa Seurat also admired. Still, he was not suited to discussing a periodical like the Booster with insight, for his world-view, his aesthetic and his interests nowhere touched those of Miller and friends.

Francis Scarfe has said that Symons and the poets associated with him, H.B.Mallalieu and Roy Fuller, "represent a slight reaction from New Verse"(FSAA.ix). Still, his name was frequently associated with that of Grigson, and at a distance it is not easy to detect what distinguished them apart. Grigson and Symons were the poetry editors of the thirties movement. Like the editor of New Verse, Symons too "was always rapping young poets over the knuckles for being 'careless' or 'formless'"(FSAA xiif). Both shared the poetic ideals associated with the name of Auden, and the following quotation from an article on Hart Crane serves well enough to indicate the direction: "In poetry the factual is to be preferred to the abstract, words to music, the real to the ideal"(FSAA.132). Again, antipathetic outsiders may be forgiven for identifying very closely Symons' Twentieth Century Verse with Grigson's pugnacious publication.

With the passing of Auden to America in January 1939, with the ending of the thirties dream, such 'classical' concepts of poetry along with their logical correlatives, social awareness and political responsibility, were reeled back from their wholly dominant positions. At the same time both magazines, regarded as mouthpieces of the "low, dishonest decade", were caught up in a highly polemical crossfire, to which Delta's Durrell and his friends from the new Poetry London contributed their share. We will come to this conflict in due course,

a conflict, which incidentally coincided with the advent of a "new crop of loony and eccentric small magazines"(NV.i.2.ns.49) that Grigson suddenly saw sprouting up all around. In the dog-days of the Booster, however, New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse, London's only poetry reviews, were still reigning supreme, and of their editors Hugh Gordon Porteus noted: "Both are well-known editors of verse magazines, and thus important by their examples as 'leaders', or as influence, by what they accept or reject"(4). They were leaders of opinion, influential, and just like Grigson's silence, Symons' verdict on the Booster will have carried some weight.

Turning to his article in Life and Letters Today, one finds Symons in a fighting mood, dealing out blows against established institutions like the Criterion ("there is a good deal wrong with The Criterion. Its price,for instance"(LLT.xviii.12.191)), praising various "small specialist reviews" with their energetic "partisan rudeness" (ibid.188f). He revealed a combative spirit. Some months later, in a rear-guard action Symons parried assaults by Tambimuttu with shouts of "literary fascism"(TCL.xvii.19), and so one might have expected him to find some similar pebbles with which to pelt a publication as unabashedly a-moral and a-social (and covertly anti-democratic) as the Booster. This was not the case.

If one of the speakers for a literary generation condescended to pass judgement on a fringe review completely adverse to the values and climate of opinion he represented, one might have looked forward to a swift and sharp execution. This did not occur in these pages. Although the fourth and final Booster had come and gone, although there had been time enough in other words to point his pen, Symons' comments on Miller's magazine were feeble and ambiguous. The question is: why?

Reading through his survey, one is most aware that this was still the age of a politically moralistic art, of the great struggle against "the forces of reaction"(LLT.xviii.12.188f), etc. The political was still the sole arena where anything noteworthy happened, there and nowhere else, and so while Symons knew with certainty the rules of the game within - "English 'literary' magazines cannot afford to be so openly Trotskyist as the Partisan Review"(ibid.190) - his critical

sense seems to have lost resolution without. The age, the summer before the Munich defeat, was political, and it seemed that a high-point in this development had not even been reached yet: "more and more periodicals are more and more propagandist in intention, if not in tone, as, driven by Fear, the collective madness spreads"(Porteus) (Criterion xvii.69.763). The criteria Symons used to establish his four-class hierarchy of little magazines, were accordingly political and not aesthetic. They included pronouncements so characteristic of the decade, such as : an editor ought to see "that to be 'just' now is to be 'liberal', that is null" and "a piece of writing must have some implication beyond itself"(5). Also, Symons felt that it was "barely necessary" to mention that a magazine's "purpose must be morally a good one, useful to the individual or the community" (ibid.). Such tools were of course quite appropriate to the general literary climate, as described above. They were wholly unsuited to dealing adequately with the Villa Seurat magazine.

Still, Symons' standards might have made for some vigorous polemic, and one recalls with some nostalgia how Joyce was denounced by some communist critic as a master idling (Hoffman 175), and his Ulysses by Karl Radek at the 1934 Writers' Congress as: "A heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope" (StR.47). Or how the The Orators and The Magnetic Mountain were said to reveal "potentially fascist thought"(Hynes 197). In the Life and Letters Today review this was not the case.

Symons was not a dogmatic critic. As Porteus wrote of him and Grigson: "Both bark more (even) than they bite"(Seven.v.26). He did look for other qualities in a little magazine, and consistency as well as "good individual features" mattered almost as much as "direction". Therefore while three unorthodox left-wing reviews (New Verse, Partisan Review, and the documentary Fact) were awarded first prizes, runners-up included Eliot's Criterion, which ranked higher for instance than the Left Review and a monthly called Spain at War. Nevertheless, there were limits and while he could accept an eclectic quarterly like the Criterion, which had come, one must add, under an increasingly political editorship (albeit "reactionary"), there were magazines which he was forced to reject. For these he created a fourth category.

Here was the basket for strange and blurred objects, into which he could throw magazines as dissimilar as the Phoenix and Harriet Munroe's Poetry, Ronald Duncan's new Townsman and the Booster. Ranking fourth then, but in fact outside and a good distance below the other three classes, was the order of magazines which "have neither knowledge of the way things are going nor of the way they want them to go, papers for which there is almost nothing to be said" (LLT.xviii.12.188f).

And this was exactly what Symons did with the Booster: he said almost nothing for it. Curiously, however, and in direct contrast to his strictures on the Phoenix - "I think it is destined to be a rare bird" (6), he also refrained from saying anything against the Booster. We may recall to mind what we have said about a hesitation on the part of the critics when dealing with the phenomenon of Henry Miller. It is not wholly impossible that the Booster simply bored the busy editor of Twentieth Century Verse. Indeed, there is nothing in his short passage on the Booster that suggests his imagination was stimulated, neither positively nor negatively, no hefty wielding of the political yardstick, no expressed accusation of "escapism", "neutrality", "literary fascism" or the like. There is indeed almost nothing whatsoever. More than three-quarters of the paragraph consist of uncommented upon quotations from the "Air-Conditioned Womb Number", intended undoubtedly to illustrate the idea that a fool is his own best expositor, and the sentences from Miller, Nin and Saroyan, do have a strange flavour, denuded of their context, which itself was eccentric enough, to be sure. Still, Symons' stratagem can hardly be said to have worked, its purport was ambiguous and it lacked a determined finishing stroke. His only direct comment on the Booster, a remark which actually introduced the quotes, was nothing less than a reluctant admission of its vitality: "There is a certain liveliness in The Booster, mostly the undeniable liveliness of Henry Miller"(ibid.200). This was all Symons said about the Villa Seurat review. The reader who accepted that Julian Symons knew the "way things were going" may have known that the Booster was best avoided. It seems unlikely, however, that he can have had any idea about what the Booster actually was about.

Symons' survey was published in the summer 1938 issue of Life and Letters Today. It was prefaced by an editorial note which read: "We do not necessarily agree with the opinions here expressed. But a contributor can express himself more freely on periodicals than an editor"(LLT.xviii.12.188). As far, at least, as the Booster was concerned, this did not hold true: that particular contributor's freedom was the freedom to say "almost nothing", whereas, printed in a previous number, the editor's comments on the Booster evinced both perspicuity and a certain sensitiveness to the Booster flair. Robert Herring, in fact, hailed the buffoonish periodical from Paris as both "perversely self-conscious", and "refreshingly Marxian, in of course the film sense"(7). Herring also noted that but for lack of time Life and Letters Today itself would have printed Miller's "I am a Wild Park", and went on to add with a flippancy fairly unusual considering the literary climate of the time, unusual but apt, that Durrell's Black Book excerpt, "to use the language of The Booster, almost, and entirely, justifies Henry Miller's blurb for it"(LLT.xvii.10.10). Though brief, these words on the Booster reveal in their feeling sense of humour, in their short hint of parody, a degree of understanding, a grasp of the Villa Seurat spirit which is rare, if not unique in published critical response.

Still, what Herring said about the Booster was more off-hand, neatly tucked away in the folds of his long introductory "News Reel", in short, not really an advertisement of the Villa Seurat review at all. The more political remarks about the Booster by Julian Symons will have elicited more attention than those of Herring, and they may have confirmed Porteus in his opinion that Life and Letters Today was being drawn into left-wing propagandist depths. The marks of a propagandist periodical, said Porteus, included the "encouragement of every channel of violence, sentimentality and vulgarity, ultimately" (Criterion.xvii.66.198). Herring's voluminous periodical, which in the words of Cyril Connolly had been "the literary event of the late twenties" (CCEC.424), was promising "to become a sort of Quarterly Left Review" (Porteus)(Criterion.xvi.65.767). It is most indicative of the Zeitgeist, incidentally, that Life and Letters Today advertised itself with this stricture from the Criterion (Criterion xvii.68.596). The observer, however, cannot but express surprise when he discovers that

among the contributors to the spring issue of that crypto-Left Review were such exponents of violence, sentimentality and vulgarity, ultimately, as Thomas Mann, Bryher, Stephen Spender, William Empson - and Hugh Gordon Porteus...(8).

Porteus was certainly one of the connoisseurs of the periodical world, more alertly intimate with its ins and outs than a later chronicler can ever hope to be. His accusation that Herring was steering a propagandist course is not to be taken lightly. Even if, at this distance, the notion that Life and Letters Today was sliding into partisanship seems hard to substantiate, and even if Porteus later said that Life and Letters Today did lack "the narrow morality" of the Left Review (Criterion xvii.58.596), he may well have been right in saying that it would "not readily print the poems of the disgraced Pasternak, or the posthumous work of the liquidated Blyzko, or examples of contemporary Japanese experimental prose and verse" (ibid.). On the whole, however, Life and Letters Today stuck to a wideness of scope so typical of the eclectic magazine, never acquired what Connolly called the partisan periodical's "intensity and urgency" (CCEC.424). Its contributors ranged from Sartre to the Sitwells, from Marianne Moore to Masaryk, from Cocteau and Kafka to Capek and Horace Gregory, from Aragon and Brecht to Rilke, William Carlos Williams and Dylan Thomas. In early 1939, Life and Letters Today incorporated The London Mercury, another characteristically eclectic review of the day - "so chummily middle-brow" as Connolly recalled (CCEC.420). From the point of view of the Villa Seurat, one can say that Herring's (albeit marginal) response to the Booster, his acknowledgement and even endorsement of the Parisian comedian mystics, were hardly suggestive of one bent on socialist propaganda. At any rate, although he may well have asked Symons to take into account the Booster when arranging for the 1938 summer's periodical survey, Herring's interest in the Villa Seurat found no further expression in his review; none of the inner circle ever advanced into the pages of the pre-war Life and Letters Today.

The Booster was largely ignored then by published critical opinion. There were, as we have said before, certain exceptions. Strictly speaking, however, even the mentions in Life and Letters Today were no more than peripheral, and one is almost tempted to say, only someone already interested in the Booster would ever really have taken notice. The only genuine exception was a short, not excessively animated controversy in the pages of the New English Weekly involving George Orwell, Hugh Gordon Porteus, Oswell Blakeston and the Boosters themselves. The platform for this exchange merits some attention.

The New English Weekly was founded in 1932 by the famous A.R.Orage. It continued after his death in 1934 under the editorship of Philip Mairet. Subtitled "A Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts", this periodical, which Cyril Connolly later listed along with the New Statesman, as "a newspaper rather than a magazine"(CCEC.426), was one of the leading journals of Major C.H.Douglas' Social Credit, a monetary reform movement which Stephen Spender later wrote held particular attraction for "reactionaries who could not swallow violence"(9). Nevertheless, what distinguished it in the eyes of its contributors, was the unusual freedom it allowed. No more need be said on this other than that George Orwell was one of its regular reviewers from 1935 to 1940, publishing here (and in Time and Tide) numerous of his political articles including "Spilling the Spanish Beans", the essay that had daunted the New Statesman. Although when the war began Orwell stopped contributing because the sheet took a pacifist line, although Stephen Spender described the Social Credit idea as "a kind of fascism without tears"(SS30s.201), the New English Weekly was no overtly partisan review, resembling at times an excited public square more than anything else. In contrast to the more exclusive arcades of the Criterion, Scrutiny, the Adelphi and the like, it was not too difficult (nor apparently prestigious) to be accepted by the New English Weekly - although Mairet may well have discontinued the unflattering entry procedures of his predecessor, which as Dylan Thomas wrote with affectionate mockery consisted of - a dusty filing cabinet: "You just wait your turn and in you go" (DTSL.123). Contributors were either paid very little or not at all (10). Still, this did not keep work from being sent in, much of which was of high quality. Eliot was involved and many of Dylan Thomas' vivacious reviews

appeared here, his notes on Beckett's Murphy, for example, as well as arti cles by Herbert Read, Porteus and others.

With reference to the New English Weekly, Miller once spoke of entering "England by the backdoor"(Corr.29). He corresponded regularly with its editor, who in turn greatly admired Miller's work (Corr.56). Indeed, his paper provided the Villa Seurat with one of its more consequential entrance-ways into London's literary halls in the years before the war.

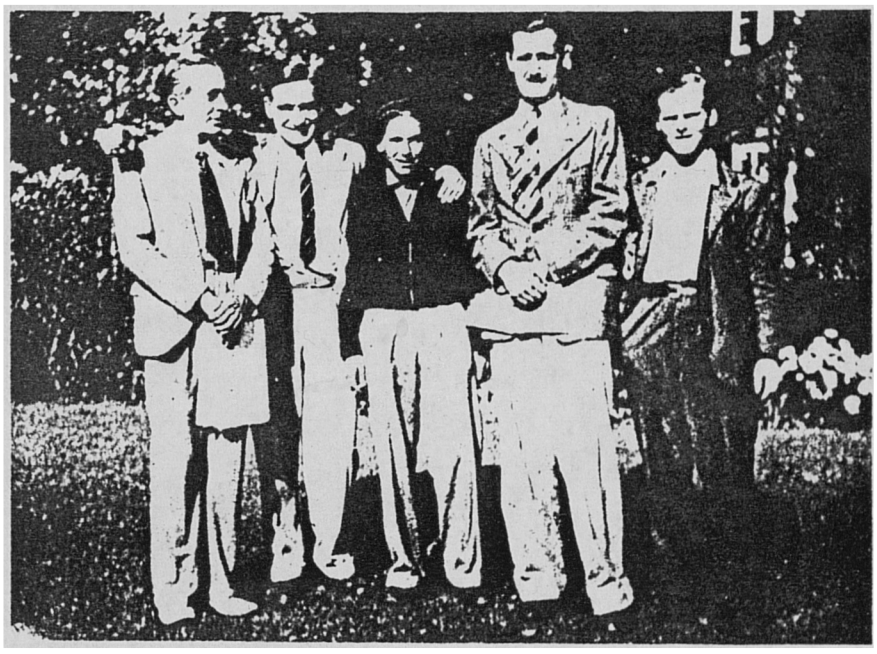
There were numerous contributions by the Paris Group. In 1936 for instance Miller contributed "The Rise of Schizophrenia"(NEW.x.4.69f). Notably, however, it was Lawrence Durrell who used this back door most frequently, presenting visiting cards like "Journal", the poem which was dedicated to David Gascoyne (NEW.xv.21.268). Apart from several reviews, Durrell also contributed the important "The Prince and Hamlet", which we will discuss in connection with the Dismemberment Delta. Some other Booster/Delta contributors include Patrick Evans ("Ionian Supper-Party), Michael Fraenkel with his "Active Negation as a Weather Solvent", Oswell Blakeston, Stephen Bylansen, Rayner Heppenstall, John Gawsworth, Gervase Stewart, J.C.Hall and Nicholas Moore.

The Villa Seurat's rear entry through the doors of the New English Weekly was accompanied by some unusual exclamations of welcome, and we do not mean by this Durrell's own "News From Paris", which was a eulogy on Max and the White Phagocytes. The group, especially Henry Miller, attracted the eager notice of the weekly's editor, its reviewers and (presumably) its readership as well. We have mentioned the anonymous review of Money in the January 12th 1939 issue, which opened with: "The most eminent of the Boosters needs no boosting" (NEW.xiv.14.210). Later in the year another unnamed critic reviewed the first volume of the Hamlet correspondence, describing it as "not far from being the worst book ever written and published" (NEW.xvi.8.118), while admitting at the same time that he was "a fan of Henry Miller's"(ibid.). Another unsigned critical notice in May 1938 referred to Miller's contribution to the first Phoenix, "The Universe of Death". It was less commendatory, emphasising that "he

really says little more than Desmond MacCarthy said brilliantly years ago" (NEW.xiii.5.97). Again, some months later, in October, Dylan Thomas mentioned "the elaborate journals of Henry Miller" in a review of Kay Boyle's Monday Night(NEW.xiv.1.11f). A year before that another anonymous reviewer found the following words of praise for "Un Etre Etoilique" which had just apppeared in the October Criterion: "A very powerful essay by Henry Miller distinguishes an already distinguished number of this quarterly"(NEW.xi.26.437f). Then there were George Orwell's forbearing comments on Michael Fraenkel's recondite Bastard Death, and more important, his reviews of Tropic of Cancer and Black Spring which had appeared in November 1935 and September 1936 respectively. George Orwell was also the critic who opened the Booster exchange with a review entitled "Back to the Twenties". His sympathetic interest in the work of Henry Miller, of which the Booster article was a not negligible part, deserves some close attention.

George Orwell on Henry Miller.

These are the bare outlines of their acquaintance. A down and out veteran of Parisian life in the late 1920s, Orwell was one of the first Englishmen to take notice of Henry Miller. His short review of Tropic of Cancer was almost wholly appreciative. Miller and Orwell embarked on a correspondence which Bernard Crick called "brief but revealing and mutually respectful"(BCGO.306). In August 1936 Miller wrote to Orwell about his Down and Out in Paris and London, and Orwell replied making various references to Black Spring, which comments formed the basis of his subsequent New English Weekly review. Around Christmas of that year, Orwell visited Henry Miller in Paris, a meeting which Perlès described in My Friend Henry Miller. Orwell was on the way to Barcelona. In September of the following year, he received a Booster circular. He promised a subscription to Durrell. In October, his critical article on the Booster, entitled "Back to the Twenties" appeared in the New English Weekly. The Booster editors answered in a polemical letter to the editor on November 4th, to which Orwell replied a week later. The exchange did not end the relationship between Orwell and Miller. In April of 1938 Miller wrote to Orwell, who had fallen ill. From early 1939 Orwell did not hear from Miller



George Orwell

for at least 18 months (CE.ii.49). In Spring 1939 Orwell began on the famous "Inside the Whale", which appeared on March 10th of the following year. Miller did not like it. On December 2nd 1942 an article titled "The End of Henry Miller" appeared in the Tribune. In early 1946, the same weekly - Orwell was now its literary editor - published a highly critical review of The Cosmological Eye.

At a first glance it would seem that "Inside the Whale", Orwell's most extensive treatment of Henry Miller, no more than summed up his previous observations on the American, elaborated on them, and placed them in a somewhat larger framework. Indeed, as Bernard Crick has shown, Orwell often developed and matured ideas for his books in book reviews (11). But this was not really the case here, for there was revealed in "Inside the Whale" a depth of concern and a psychological tension, which set it qualitatively apart from his earlier writings on the American. "Inside the Whale" was a multiplex essay, as much a dark prophecy of totalitarian times as it was a bitter valediction to the literary 1930s, even to liberal Western culture and literature in its known form, was as much a treatise on morality, propaganda and art, as a discussion about Henry Miller. "Inside the Whale" in fact tried to pull together all those threads of concern which its author had been spinning throughout the decade, and so, as much as anything else then "Inside the Whale" was also a very personal document evincing those impulsions and attitudes which were Orwell's own at the end of a tumultuous decade.

His early observations on Miller did not manifest an awareness of the moral and political questions implied in Cancer and Black Spring. While the cultural background against which Miller's books operated were canvassed - Orwell saw, for example, a "monstrous soppification of the sexual theme" in English fiction, resulting from the decline of religion (CE.i.179) - a more strictly moral and social dimension was markedly absent. It was however precisely on questions of this nature that Orwell focussed in "Inside the Whale" and his later articles.

In the 1935 review of Cancer Orwell praised the book's frank realism, its insistence on the facts of everyday life. Cancer, he said, attacked the pervasive and false idealisation of the body: "Man is not a Yahoo, but he is rather like a Yahoo and needs to be reminded of it from time to time"(CE.i.179). Orwell approved of Miller's reminder, and less than a year later, he even said he had "underpraised" the book in his first review(CE.i.259).

In the meantime, however, Orwell, whose Keep the Aspidistra Flying of 1936 was still "essentially unpolitical"(BCGO.277), had come to the insight that "the main dilemmas of his time expressed themselves in political terms"(BCGO.277). He travelled to the North of England, wrote up his experiences, and came out - as Bernard Crick said - committed to a radical socialism (BCGO.294). But though Crick noted that at this point Orwell had already developed a dislike both for Miller's cynicism and for his "a-political stance", the review of Black Spring, written while he was still working on The Road to Wigan Pier, did not contain any overt political criticisms (BCGO.307).

In this review Orwell began by remarking again on the frankness of Tropic of Cancer, on the peculiar absence of those "feelings of horror and repentance" which had flawed a greater work like Ulysses. He also observed (interestingly) that Miller's book was free of Whitman's puritanism and "American bumptiousness"(CE.i.260). He pointed out that Tropic of Cancer actually bridged the gap which yawned in the novel between the artist/intellectual and the common man, something "extremely rare" in modern fiction (ibid.). On the whole, however, his view of Black Spring was more reserved than that of Cancer. While thinking it a technical advance, while saluting some of its "astonishing" prose, he questioned the all too frequent departure from ordinary reality into what he called "a kind of Mickey Mouse universe where things do not happen according to the ordinary laws of space and time" (CE.i.260). As he had written in a letter to Miller in Paris a month before, he himself had "a sort of belly-to-earth attitude and always feel uneasy when I get away from the ordinary world where grass is green, stones hard etc" (ibid.257). Orwell well observed that the American's admirable fluency, his "remarkable power over words which enables him to slide from reality to fantasy and from urinals to

angels without the smallest appearance of effort or incongruity" (ibid.261) was a faculty the generous use of which was very difficult to resist. It was not that he rejected categorically a relaxation of the laws of "ordinary reality" in writing. This technique, he felt, should, however, not be used too often, because otherwise: "the written word loses its power"(ibid.). Referring to these lines Bernard Crick has pointed out that "here is not just the first use in Orwell of the last touchstone of truth in Nineteen Eighty-Four, but a discussion of naturalism and fantasy that anticipates the epistemology on which the whole book was to be based"(BCGO.307).

Orwell went to Spain, and of his subsequent experiences in England we have written. "The Spanish war and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood", Orwell himself later wrote: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it"(12). If we turn to "Inside the Whale", we must say that though it belonged to the category 'serious work', it is not quite that clear, as we shall now show, whether it had anything to do with the ideal of democratic socialism, "directly or indirectly"(ibid.).

Orwell began to write "Inside the Whale" in the Spring of 1939. It was completed in the drôle de guerre period. In later chapters we will return to describe these dark and pessimistic days of the post-Munich era, a time when Miller and his Spenglerian friends suddenly seemed to be vindicated in their catastrophic prophecies. It was a period of "nostalgia and apocalyptic apprehension", as Samuel Hynes has said, and Orwell's own Coming Up for Air expressed it exemplarily (Hynes 367). His renewed treatment of Miller could not but partake of this darkness of mood.

Of all the works of Miller he might have commented on, in "Inside the Whale" Orwell concentrated more or less exclusively on Cancer and Black Spring. As we shall see below, this was not without consequences for his assessment of Miller's work as a whole. The quality of these two books Orwell now saw resting not only on aesthetic grounds, nor on Miller's extraordinary individual courage, nor on his power to bridge

the gap to the ordinary man. Orwell had come to feel - or so he suggested in this essay - that Miller's work was eloquent of the only possible attitude for a writer in those ominous and manifestly pre-totalitarian times.

Orwell began his analysis by asking: how or why was Tropic of Cancer a remarkable book? As before, Tropic of Cancer was said to be a book which owned up to everyday facts, opening up a new world not by showing what is strange "but by revealing what is familiar"(CE.i.542). The emphasis was on the familiar. "Why is it that these monstrous trivialities are so engrossing? Simply because the whole atmosphere is deeply familiar"(ibid.544). This time, however, Orwell did not stop here but went on to enquire why everything was so familiar. Aspects of the answer which he found have already been referred to in above chapters. He arrived at the conclusion that quite aside from Miller's subject matter, quite apart from his skillful handling of character, powerfully rhythmical prose, mastery of technique, everything was familiar because the attitude implied in his work was so deeply familiar. It was, and we have quoted Orwell before on this, the attitude of the 'common man'.

Miller was happy and not frightened, he accepted the world as it was. It was this acceptance, Orwell believed, this passivity which brought him so close to the ordinary man, closer at any rate, than any of the "more purposive writers" (CE.i.548) could ever hope to come. The ordinary man, said Orwell, was passive, irresponsible and non-political, and like Miller, "far from endeavouring to influence the future, he simply lies down and lets things happen to him"(CE.i.549). We have already tried to show that this view of the 'common man' seemed inexact. As we shall see, it was subsequently abandoned by Orwell as well. In "Inside the Whale", however, Orwell aligned Miller with 'common man' and contrasted him with the propagandist writers of the (bygone) age, those "cocksure partisans telling you what to think" (ibid.). In point of fact, the argument of the essay rests on this juxtaposition, and there is no question where his sympathies lay. Miller's was a voice from the crowd, "with no humbug in it, no moral purpose, merely an implicit assumption that we are all alike" (ibid.543).

Retreat into privacy, into what is wholly familiar, into the subjective, was a movement away from the engaged writing of the thirties, away also from the false belief - as Orwell, the libertarian socialist put it - that "Socialism could preserve and even enlarge the atmosphere of liberalism"(CE.i.576). Again, Miller's quietism, said Orwell, was the only attitude immediately appropriate to the impending collapse of Western liberal culture, the end of its relative freedom and literature "in the form which we know it"(ibid.). Miller's was the only outlook adequate to the twilight period before the night of fascism which Orwell was certain would immediately be imposed in England once a war began(Hynes 373), before "an age of totalitarian dictatorships" set in (CE.i.576).

But was Miller's passivity really justifiable, asked Orwell and the rhetorical way he asked seemed to demand a negative answer: was it possible to accept "fear, tyranny and regimentation"(ibid.547), was it legitimate to endure passively concentration camps, poison gas and torture? Astonishingly, his answer was: yes, this attitude was justifed.

In "Inside the Whale", it seems, the pessimist of 1984 held sway over the idealistic activist of Homage to Catalonia. "Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism - robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it"(ibid.577). It is true, this quietism, Orwell hinted, might carry one through the dark age to a new world, to a "new society", and, if one looks carefully one does catch a brief glimpse of this ideally free and equal society, "a society of pure Communism" (ibid.547). However, the nearer totalitarian future was far more in focus, a nightmarish reality...

Passivity was a mode of survival, of human survival. Just as in the Great War a poem like "Prufrock" was welcomed because it spoke with "a human voice", "innocent of public-spiritedness"(E.M.Forster) (ibid.574), so, said Orwell, in the gloom of 1939 and early 1940, "the passive, non-co-operative attitude implied in Henry Miller's work is justified" (ibid.575). He continued:

Whether or not it is an expression of what people ought to feel, it probably comes somewhere near to expressing what they do feel. Once again it is the human voice among the bomb-explosions, a friendly American voice, 'innocent of public-spiritedness'. No sermons, merely the subjective truth (ibid.575)

We have said that "Inside the Whale" was a personal document. Its title derived from Miller's "Un Etre Etoilique", which Orwell felt included one of those "revealing passages in which a writer tells you a great deal about himself while talking about somebody else" (ibid.570). Funnily enough, this observation applied with remarkable felicity to his own essay, since, in the words of his biographer Bernard Crick, "Inside the Whale" (both the essay and the volume of essays wth the same title) revealed

an agonized tension in Orwell at this time between the progressive, revolutionary libertarian (looking forward to a free, but socially responsible, literature and society) and the Jeremiah or foreteller of catastrophe (who could enjoy, like Henry Miller, art for art's sake and memories of the past until the end came).(BCGO.386)

For all the wide and supple perceptiveness of Crick's biography, his very brief analysis of "Inside the Whale" played down exceedingly Orwell's powerful argument for the non-political, the common man's stance. Crick spoke of "a thin red line of hope" amidst a "frighteningly plausible warning of total defeat"(ibid.386), but he associates this line of hope only with Orwell's revolutionary optimism. Orwell's attraction to Miller is reduced in Crick's book to the realm of art and the foretelling of doom, while the essay's argument (in my reading) is neglected that passivity was the ordinary man's outlook in times of peace and his response to catastrophe as well, his key to survival. Saying that Orwell "held up Henry Miller as an extreme case of a writer so good that he has to be defended despite his cynicism and, something worse than simple political irrelevance, his positive mockery of public, republican values"(BCGO.385) is fitting, but not enough. There was more that connected Orwell and Miller, quite aside from the fact that the frankly comical tone which underlies Orwell's report of their meeting in Paris - "He merely told me in forcible terms that to go to Spain at that moment was the act of an idiot ...

In any case my ideas about combating Fascism, defending democracy, etc. etc. were all boloney" (CE.i.569) - suggests he took a certain pleasure in these insults. Orwell was "intrigued" rather than indignant!

We believe that "Inside the Whale" was a soliloquy, Orwell's protracted interest in Miller a manifestation of an inner dialogue. Many of his observations on Miller reflect this peculiar ambivalence between his socialist, humanistic optimism and a detached observant pessimism, between his hope for a new world and the fatalistic belief that all progress was a "swindle". Miller, in short, was a part of Orwell.

As Bernard Crick said tactfully: "The essay is not wholly consistent" (BCGO.385). Consider Orwell's closing description of the American as a "completely negative, unconstructive, amoral writer, a mere Jonah, a passive accepter of evil, a sort of Whitman among the corpses" (CE.i.578). According to his foregoing argument for the passive attitude one might have expected epithets less emotive and derogatory. Similarly, his summing up in the injunction "Sit on your bum" (CE.i.572) the moral "for practical purposes" of Miller's quietism is folowed immediately by an endorsement of that moral. "Inside the Whale" is full of such tonal ambivalence.

He defended Cancer and Black Spring, to the extent that in Time and Tide Arthur Calder-Marshall (in my opinion understandably, though not in that of Bernard Crick) accused him of "sharing Miller's quietism rather than simply and pointedly tolerating it"(BCGO.384). He admired Miller and could say precisely why he admired him: "Good novels are not written by orthodoxy sniffers ... Good novels are written by people who are not frightened"(CE.i.569). Like Miller, Orwell was not frightened. But still, his admiration was not whole-hearted, and so in the end Bernard Crick may be right when he said: "The balance does come down in favour of the libertarian" (BCGO.386).

Paradoxically, then, while predicting an upsurge of "the passive attitude"(CE.i.576), Orwell also believed the American to be "essentially a man of one book"(ibid.577). While declaring Miller the "only imaginative prose writer"(ibid.578) to have appeared in England or America for many years, Orwell seized on the fact that Black Spring occasionally drifted away into "mere verbiage or into the squashy universe of the Surrealists"(ibid.542), and prophecied that Miller would eventually "descend into unintelligibilty, or into charlatanism"(ibid.577).

War came to England, and while the dawning of a totalitarian age was postponed, Orwell's views of Henry Miller underwent a change. In 1942 an article appeared in the Tribune and it was entitled "The End of Henry Miller". Had Bernard Crick's "progressive, revolutionary libertarian" finally gained ascendancy over the pessimistic prophet of catastrophe? It would seem so. But this victory was still a very tenuous affair. A thorough criticism of Miller from a humanistic point of view did not appear until 1946. "The End of Henry Miller" was the link between Orwell's largely positive assessment of Miller in "Inside the Whale" and his damning post-war critique of The Cosmological Eye.

Although "The End of Henry Miller" opened with the words: "No more that is of any value will come out of Henry Miller" (Tribune.cccx.18), a good part of the article was devoted to explaining (again) why Orwell thought that "Tropic of Cancer has its place in the short list of twentieth-century novels that are worth reading" (Tribune.cccx.19). As he had done in his review of Black Spring and in "Inside the Whale", Orwell stressed how close Miller had been able to get to the 'common man'. Cancer, he said, was no less than "a straightforward attempt to describe life as it is seen and lived by the average sensual man" and Miller, "a brilliant prose-writer", who nevertheless "writes as the average man talks", was again presented as "an out-at-elbow American of exceptional intelligence, but of average morals and opinions, talking about his everyday life" (ibid.18). Orwell still underlined how singular an event Miller's book had been in the literary 1930s, and that he had shown both "the daring and the good temper to write about life as it is"(ibid.19). For the reader of "Inside the

Whale" these paragraphs ring very familiar.

Miller was a highbrow American novelist living in a Paris backstreet, and to that extent his circumstances were abnormal, but in writing Tropic of Cancer he was filling a gap that existed in the over-political literature of the nineteen-thirties. The book has no moral, it offers no programme, no key to the universe. It speaks for the common man whose aim is, first, self-preservation, and secondly, a 'good time'. Is the common man heroic? Not consciously. Is he anxious to die for a Cause? No. Does he want to be faithful to his wife? No. Does he even want to work? Not very much. This side of human nature Miller expressed admirably because he not only shared it but, as a lumpenproletarian intellectual, a man who for many years had walked the narrow tightrope between starvation and honest work, possessed it in a hypertrophied form. (Tribune.cccx.18)

But, said Orwell, "when the period of wars and revolutions had reopened", all that changed and Miller proved "one more instance of the fact that even the best writer has only a limited number of books in him" (ibid.). When he left France, Miller's "contacts with contemporary life became less intimate" (Tribune.cccx.18). He cut himself off from his roots in France, and (like Antaeus) lost the familiarity with his surroundings which had once given such vitality to Tropic of Cancer. The loss was evinced, said Orwell, in his latest "pot-boiler", The Colossus of Maroussi. This book, Orwell felt,

barely rises above the level of the ordinary travel book; indeed, it has all the normal stigmata of the travel book, the fake intensities, the tendency to discover the 'soul' of a town after spending two hours in it, the boring conversations with taxi-drivers.(ibid.)

Up to this point Orwell's argument did not diverge markedly from his previous reviews. In its lack of familiarity and belly-to-earth realism, Miller's account of Greece was not much different from the "squashy universe of the Surrealists" which Orwell had previously seen flawing Black Spring (CE.i.542). But there was an important shift noticeable in "The End of Henry Miller".

Orwell now held that it was inevitable for a writer like Miller that he should leave his 'home-ground' in times of danger and unrest. It was inevitable that he should condemn himself to superficiality. For in a time when war had swept across France and Europe, Miller's non-heroic penchant and his voyou maxims for survival would lead him

naturally away from Paris and away from Europe, "almost automatically away from any place where anything interesting is happening"(ibid.). This is a very important point. In "Inside the Whale", the question of where and when one wrote was considered to be of minor importance. What really mattered was that essential familiarity with one's subject matter. "Inside the Whale" was among other things the attempt to explain why the "monstrous trivialities" in Cancer were so deeply "engrossing" (CE.i.544), why they fascinated at a time when "the Italians were marching into Abyssinia and Hitler's concentration camps were already bulging" (CE.i.542), when nothing "interesting" was really happening in Montparnasse at all. In "The End of Henry Miller", Orwell had a different view. Now, it did matter very much where one lived and worked. Miller might establish a new familiarity with new surroundings, say in Big Sur, but this would not redeem his work. Books lacking the 'interesting' milieu were of negligible worth:

> What a book he might have written, with his mastery of words and his disillusioned eye, about life in Paris under the Germans! But then, if the Germans were in Paris Miller would inevitably be somewhere else, and therein lies his limitation. (ibid.)

More important, "The End of Henry Miller" reveals that in late 1942 Orwell no longer condoned, as he had done earlier, the passive, accepting and non-heroic attitude to life as evinced in Miller's work. "Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism", he had said in 1939/40, and he had sympathised and even accepted the idea of "robbing reality of its terrors by submitting to it"(CE.i.577). Now, however, he implicitly restated the belief that idealistic action was a genuine alternative and even a necessity. This change had to do with a change in his view of the 'common man'.

Significantly, in the above quoatation where Orwell asked whether the 'common man' was heroic or not was not, he did not answer this in the negative. Rather he added the qualification: "Not consciously". Perhaps the homme moyen sensuel was so "unconsciously"? The qualification, in fact, opened to Orwell a new perspective beyond the pessimistic "Inside the Whale". Mankind, Orwell now said, was living "in what is, however unwillingly, a heroic age" (Tribune.cccx.18), and, crucially, the 'ordinary man' took part "not consciously" in the

heroism of the time. Action, a non-passive stance was a possibility. Under the impression of the war, especially, one would think, of the heroism of the ordinary Londoners during the Battle of Britain, Orwell's view of the 'common man' had changed in a most significant way. If the 'average man' was after all capable of such 'heroic' action, if he was not the passive, non-moral creature of "Inside the Whale", then he might be capable of engaging meaningfully in politics, and thus perhaps the hope for democratic socialism and for a radical improvement of society was not an illusion after all.

This upgrading of the the 'ordinary man' led Orwell to qualify his admiration for Miller. He now relegated what had earlier been the disheartening congruence between Miller and the 'ordinary man' to one "side of human nature"(ibid.). To the other and better side of human nature, the 'heroic' side, disillusioned Henry Miller had no access. And what is even more important, Orwell could now even commit that disenchanting congruence between Miller and the 'ordinary man' to the past, to a time before the heroic "period of wars and revolutions reopened" and swept Miller away to America (Tribune.cccx.18). This was an important step. Orwell now suggested that Miller had spoken for the 'ordinary non-political man' of the 1930s. He had not spoken, as "Inside the Whale" still claimed, for some rock-bottom, eternal 'common man'. Miller's a-political and unheroic attitude and his abilities as a writer were now seen as linked vitally to the Zeitgeist of the "sordid", non-heroic twenties and thirties in Paris.

> A writer's work is not something he takes out of his brain like tins of soup out of a storeroom. He has to create it day by day out of his contacts with people and things, and he is not likely to do his best when the kind of world he understands and enjoys has passed away. In The Colossus of Maroussi Miller notes sadly that the war will destroy everything that he himself regards as valuable. (Tribune.cccx.18f)

In "The End of Henry Miller" Orwell still conceded that the American had expressed admirably the non-heroic side of human nature. But Miler's relevance was qualified. The step to reducing Miller's attitude to one pertaining solely to the world of the 1930s was already taken and from there it was not far to denigrating him to being a mere a spokesman for the half-world denizens of Clichy and

Montparnasse. Orwell was only an inch away from robbing him entirely of the cloak of universality that he himself had wrapped around the American in the drôle de guerre months of 1939-1940. And when he said in "The End of Henry Miller" that the "Latin Quarter of Paris with its population of artists, bugs, prostitutes, duns and lunatics, was his spiritual home" (Tribune.cccx.18), it was this reductive line of argument that he took up again in his cutting review of The Cosmological Eye several years later.

In that review which appeared in the Tribune in February 1946, Orwell again conceded some of Miller's qualities as a writer. He even admitted that Miller's was "a bold, florid, rhythmical prose of a kind that had not been seen in England for twenty years past" (CE.iv.134), that he had a gift for "describing the under side of life"(ibid.136). And in the "unpretentious autobiography" of "Via Newhaven-Dieppe" (sic!), according to Orwell, Miller did conjure up "the old magic" (ibid.). And how that magic worked is best described in the reviewer's astonishing disclosure: "I remember reading it just after Munich and reflecting that, though the Munich settlement was not a thing to be proud of, this little episode made me feel more ashamed of my country" (ibid.134). Nevertheless, in the main, Orwell now strongly criticised Miller's work and his attitudes.

Taking exception to essays such as "The Universe of Death" and "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere", Orwell pointed out "how little he says" in these tracts(ibid.134), how much of it was banal, meaningless or pure rubbish, "a banging on the big drum - noise proceeding from emptiness"(ibid.). Orwell discussed the techniques of Miller's nebulous 'cosmological' jargon and came to the conclusion (finally) that what there is of substance is "mostly commonplace, and often reactionary" (ibid.135). Much of what Miller said was reducible, as Orwell found, "to a sort of nihilistic quietism"(ibid.).

Full of disdain, Orwell eloquently paraded some of the major contradictions in the Millerian credo: his extreme pacifism, for instance, that contrasted roughly with a "yearning for violence", his ostensible indifference to politics as opposed to his "constantly making political pronouncements"(CE.iv.135), his belief that life is "wonder-

ful" which clashed with the expectation of seeing "everything blown to bits before too long"(ibid.). Orwell found it especially unacceptable that Miller did "not even feel the need to be consistent in his opinions"(ibid.).

On the whole this critique seems more than tenable, the distaste for Miller's obscurantism, his 'philosophical' banalities are understandable, Orwell's anger with those "judgements on God, the universe, war, revolution, Hitler, Marxism, and 'the Jews'"(ibid.136) more than justified, reflecting as it did his sharpened concern about the abuse of language in the service of politics.

Still, there is a curious thing about Orwell's attack: the publication dates of the contributions to The Cosmological Eye. These show that almost without exception they had been issued in different magazines or collections in the years before the war. They were published, in other words, not only well before he had completed "The End of Henry Miller" but also well before he had finished "Inside the Whale". Moreover, these fragments, stories and articles, were readily accessible in England (also through the Booster and Delta), and there is also good reason to suppose that Orwell had read most of them before his Whale essay appeared in 1940. There were in The Cosmological Eye three excepts from Black Spring, a book which he had reviewed. "Peace! It's Wonderful!" appeared in Seven of winter 1938, "The Universe of Death" in the Spring Phoenix of 1938. The first volume of the Hamlet correspondence was reviewed in the New English Weekly on December 7th 1939, and it is not unlikely that Orwell had read at least parts of it. He was inspired, as we have suggested, to his memorable image of Miller as fiddling while Rome was burning with his face towards the flames by the American's lines in that correspondence: "I am singing now while Rome burns"(Hamlet 56). Orwell mentions Max and the White Phagocytes in "Inside the Whale" and praised it in "The End of Henry Miller". This collection included "Via Dieppe Newhaven", which, as we have said, he recalls reading at the time of its publication. It also included "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere", "Max", essays on Reichel, Brassai and Anais Nin (we have suggested that he took the "Inside the Whale" image from the latter), as well as the surrealistic "Scenario"(also published in

Paris 1937). If, and so one must assume, Orwell was familiar in the years 1939/40 with what he subsequently insisted on calling Miller's "later writing" (13), if he all but ignored it in "Inside the Whale" and even in "The End of Henry Miller", and then moved it to the centre of his post-war criticism of Miller, then the question why he did so requires some consideration.

Most, perhaps even all the features which Orwell singled out for attack in 1946 had been there all along in Miller's work, even in Cancer and Black Spring, the books which Orwell tended to concentrate on when discussing Miller's merits. True, Cancer was different from "the unreadable Hamlet book"(CE.iv.136). But as early as 1933, well before Orwell ever heard of Miller, Anais Nin sketched out the particular road Miller had embarked on: "Henry believes he is passing through a great transition from romantic interest in life to classical interest in ideas"(AN.i.198). Not only were the essential ingredients of his world-view there, but also the propensity to 'philosophise' and to pontificate. Much of what Orwell was to say about these ingredients and Miller's way of presenting them rings true: they were often 'common-place', inconsistent, meaningless or 'downright reactionary' - if one chose to look at them in those terms. The point is that up to the end of the war Orwell had not not looked at them in those terms. All the elements which the Englishman chose to condemn in his 1946 review strutted around in Cancer, including, of course, Miller's talking "a good deal about 'great men' and 'aristocrats of the spirit'" (CE.i.135). Only, as we have seen, Orwell preferred to comment on other things.

The times changed, Orwell changed. Before the war, the American's quietism and passivity had made for a human voice among the corpses. And in "The End of Henry Miller" the non-heroic attitude was still depicted as pertaining to one side of human nature and to the 'common man' of the sordid thirties. Now, in 1946 the execrableness of Miller's fatalism was beyond question. Without failing to point at the unintentional irony of Orwell blaming Miller for not even wanting to be consistent in his opinions, we might ask again: whence this change?

Invariably, any answer will fall short of the intricacies of a character as alert as Orwell's, fail to do justice to occurrences and developments of the war years. But as we have suggested, one area where an answer might be found was in that crucial but shifting nexus Orwell had established between Miller and the 'ordinary man'. In "Inside the Whale", Orwell had claimed, as we have seen, that the experiences of "the derelict, the déclassé, the adventurer, the American intellectual without roots and without money" actually coincided "fairly widely" with those of the common man (CE.iv.550). Up to a point "The End of Henry Miller" had still upheld this idea. But, as we have suggested, Orwell was already in the process changing his mind about this. The 'common man' was not only non-heroic and passive. In 1946 Orwell wrote that Miller's "irresponsible attitude" had been adequate to his life as "an outcast and vagabond, having unpleasant experiences with policemen, landladies, wives, duns, whores, editors and such-like"(CE.iv.136), more than appropriate for a work like Cancer; here it "did no harm", but otherwise it was dangerous and condemnable. Miller's link with the 'common man' was severed.

In our opinion, however, Orwell's latter interpretation was no less limited than his previous ones. In the "Inside the Whale" essay the prolix and irresponsible literary cosmologist was simply ignored and Miller presented as no more than a friendly voice from a third class carriage, a writer powerful for his proximity to the 'ordinary man'. In the review of The Cosmological Eye Miller was still acknowledged as the powerful chronicler of "Via Dieppe-Newhaven"; in the main, however, he was criticised as the reactionary waffler beating the empty mystical drum. Orwell did not correlate the two sides, the cosmologist and the comic realist, to one another, not even in his last review of Miller. They were simply set side by side. The one aspect was praised ('the old magic'), the other condemned, but no key was offered. But there did exist a key.

It was, as we have tried to point out in our comments on Miller's "The Enormous Womb", the following: the passive non-political man of "Inside the Whale" was a fiction. But there was an 'ordinary man' whom Miller spoke of and for with familiarity (hence his powerful prose), and this 'ordinary man' was the destabilised petit-bourgeois of the

Depression years. In the wake of the Depression one would almost certainly have overheard the friendly "voice from the crowd, from the underling, from the third-class carriage" enunciating precisely those irresponsible ale-house politics with their grand 'solutions' that Miller's essays abound with. It was probably the same man whose patriotic 'heroism' in Orwell's "period of wars and revolutions" saved England from Nazi domination. And, one might add, it was the same man who carried under the swastika death and destruction across the lands of Europe....

But perhaps all that is too sweeping. It would be naive to suppose that the link between lower-middle class world-views and reactionary politics was lost on a conscientious observer like Orwell. Still, he did not apply it to his analysis of Miller. As "The End of Henry Miller" showed, at some point he realised that the view of the passive and non-political 'ordinary man' presented in "Inside the Whale" needed to be qualified. But he never actually said that both Miller's occasionally reactionary utterances and his astounding resonance as a writer depicting "life as it is"(Tribune.cccx.19) sprang from the same source, which was the experience of the Surplus Man. In The Cosmological Eye review at any rate there is no indication of this, and Miller lingered on in the reader's mind as a verbose reactionary of bohemien provenance, inexplicably endowed with certain literary gifts....

Orwell's changed view of Miller may have been fed by another motive. There is a short chapter in Raymond Williams' Culture and Society in which the author tried to explain why so much of Orwell's work has "an effect of paradox"(RWCS.277), why for example this avid believer in socialism "popularized a severe and damaging criticism of the idea of socialism and its adherents"(ibid.). Williams' answer, which also suggests another reason for Orwell's unusual and prolonged interest in Henry Miller, centred on the argument that he was in effect caught in what he called: "the paradox of exile"(ibid.279). What does this mean? Belonging on the one hand like Miller to the "significant number of men who, deprived of a settled way of living, or of a faith, or having rejected those which were inherited, find virtue in a kind of improvised living, and in an assertion of independence" (ibid.),

Orwell, on the other hand, felt the need to explain and justify his rejection of existing society by some principle. He turned to socialism, which, though recognised as the only way to alleviate or remedy poverty and suffering, nevertheless in turn threatened (being a social principle) his own individuality: "The exile, because of his own personal position, cannot finally believe in any social guarantee: to him, because this is the pattern of his own living, almost all association is suspect"(ibid.281). We cannot reiterate completely the implications Williams saw resulting from this inner "deadlock" (ibid.282), though Orwell apparently suggested a solution which Miller would have rejected with disgust, that "the writer must divide: one part of himself uncommitted, the other part involved"(ibid.). This division of personality, however, may possibly be brought to bear on his changeable relation to Miller.

There is a revealing passage in The Cosmological Eye review. Referring to Miller's quietistic, individualistic view of society, Orwell points out: "This has come to be a familiar attitude nowadays"(CE.iv.135). An critical undertone is perceptible. Why? In terms clearly reminiscent of those he used to attack the left-wing orthodoxy of the 1930s for their war-mongering from a position of "personal immunity" (CE.i.566) in "Inside the Whale", Orwell berated Miller and "those who talk in the same vein" for always making sure that they are inside "bourgeois-democratic society" (CE.iv.135) when criticising it, assured of the freedom it offered but without feeling any obligation to it. Our comparison with "Inside the Whale" is deliberate, for plainly, Orwell no longer felt that there was anything singular, nothing unusual or courageous about Miller's outlook, "that of a simple individualist"(ibid.). On the contrary, it had become "familiar" in a negative sense. Both sides of Orwell - as Williams defined them - may now have revolted against Miller, both the individualistic exile and the democratic socialist. The exile, independent individualist and admirer of the absoluteness with which Miller had once lived his irresponsible and alienated life (against the current), now turned against his success, against the accepted "familiarity" of his ideas, against his ponderous preaching to an eager congregation. And the humanist who had whispered in Orwell's ear all along now felt free to assert with unbridled vigour the socially

harmful, reactionary character of Miller's stance.

In 1939, still outside the mainstream of an overwhelmingly left-wing orthodoxy, in the shadow of another world war, Orwell, himself "both exile and vagrant" as Williams said (14), both individualist and foreteller of doom, both optimist and pessimist, felt an intensive kinship to Miller. In 1946 this feeling was apparently no longer possible. His respect for Miller had vanished. His notes on The Cosmological Eye closed with the wish that Miller's material difficulties in California might once again prod him to some better, auto-biographical writing. And his advice to Miller was that "he must give up 'being God', because the only good book that God ever wrote was the Old Testament"(CE.iv.136).

Return to the Booster

Orwell's "Back to the Twenties" appeared in the New English Weekly on October 21st 1937 (NEW.xii.2.30f). It is not certain whether he asked or even wanted to review the Booster. He did not necessarily enjoy reviewing very much, Bernard Crick has said, but after their flight from Spain the Blairs were in dire need of money and one simply "could not afford to turn anything down"(BCGO.349). Presumably, political books interested him more in those days. Still, he retained his "love of literature" (BCGO.351), and so one cannot help wondering what, after surviving months of dirty trench-warfare, street-fighting, after being shot through the neck, hunted by police and hounded by the communist press, Orwell thought of this literary publication from Paris, this review, edited by a man whom he (still) respected and admired. He thought the Booster a joke, and a joke which was not even funny.

With force and directness, Orwell decribed the Booster as "a perfectly ordinary, damn-silly magazine of the pseudo-artistic type that used to appear and die with the rapidity of May flies in Montparnasse in the 'twenties". He substantiated his claim by giving a short and racy, mildly ironical summary of its contents. Miller's "Benno" was a "not bad fantasy portrait", Brassai's photograph put down as "excellent", and Rattner's drawing as "not altogether disagreeable". The poems

elicited no more than: "you can guess what those are like, for how many kinds of poem are there nowadays?". He chose simply to disregard what he called "some stuff in French" (which actually included work by Miller-Valentin Nieting, Perlès and Anais Nin) and did not comment on Miller's "A Boost for Hans Reichel" at all. He mentioned briefly "a burlesque article on sport", the society notes "which are not even burlesque", as well as the letter to the Park Commissioner by Phineas Flapdoodle. Orwell did pause to comment on the advertisements, the "only definitely comic feature in the magazine"; the thought of the "entire tribe of Paris-American snob-shops" hoodwinked evidently filling him, former grand hotel dish-washer, with great pleasure. And he added: "For 'The Booster's' sake let us hope they paid cash in advance". But aside from this, asked Orwell, was there anything funny about the Booster? He answered his own question with a clear: no, there was not.

The Booster may be forgiven for taking Orwell's review for an attack. From their point of view, it undoubtedly was. From his standpoint it was not an attack, or rather: not only an attack. "Back to the Twenties" was in fact a first attempt on the part of Orwell at placing the Paris Group around Miller politically, at defining their implied attitude towards the modern world. It was not a very successful attempt.

Orwell introduced his article by recalling a story he had once read by Robert Graves, a story about a man who passed a whole year making the acquaintance of people whose name ended in "bottom". After the year was over he invited them to dinner, but left his guests shortly before the meal was served. The meal was made up only of rumpsteak. A seemingly odd analogy, which Orwell, however, was quick to explain. "Is this funny?" he enquired : "No, it isn't, and perhaps that was the point. If you wanted to do anything so completely futile as wasting a year of life on a practical joke, surely it would be all the more futile if the joke was not even funny?". The idea is: the Booster was a bad joke, a mediocre magazine - by design.

Armed with this remarkable insight, Orwell proceeded to sketch out briefly what he considered to be a conceivable stance "towards modern life". In face of the horror of the modern world in general, in face of what Orwell then narrowed down to his own particular political nightmares, "Hitler, Stalin, Lord Rothermere, etc.", one could well react by making "some gestures of supreme futility, something so unutterably meaningless and stupid that Caligula making his horse consul would seem sensible by comparison". The Booster was such a gesture.

Orwell, the veteran of the Huesca front, left no doubt that in his view this kind of reaction was "perhaps not the most satisfactory one"; in fact, he felt it to be "rather safe and feeble". But it was possible, a mode of action, a way - in his words - of "hitting back". It was this attitude - "if any", Orwell adds significantly - which he saw motivating the Booster: "It seems to me an effort to produce something finally and unsurpassedly pointless" - in order to make an existential, or rather, a political point.

With this argumentative somersault, hovering uneasily somewhere between speciousness and irony, Orwell actually brought the Booster around to his side: in itself the Booster was absurd and stupid, but in a larger frame of reference, he implied, it was an intentional, active gesture in the right direction.

A forerunner, in which Orwell might have found similarities to his ideas on the Booster, was dada. That paradoxical movement had wedded nonsense and protest, but "stopped short at parody and mockery" (Modernism 302). Dada, too, had been an absurd and extreme gesture against the absurdity and extremity of "modern life". Responding to the insanity of the war, to its preposterous bestiality, false idealism and technologically perfected horror, the dadaists had created in turn insanity, outrage, sacrilege, subversion. "Negativism, revolt, destruction of all values, Dada was a violent protest against art, literature, morals, society", noted David Gascoyne in 1935, the art, literature and morals of a society which had sent a generation to the fields of Flanders. "Dada was a spectacular form of suicide, a manifestation of almost lunatic despair"(DGSS.23f).

Orwell did not refer specifically to the dadaists. But when he described the Booster as a gesture wholly futile, as "something finally and unsurpassably pointless", inferring, however, a distinctive extra-literary purpose, which was to protest, to strike back at the world's madness and injustice, he may well have been conscious of the analogy. As a literary magazine, Orwell suggested, the Booster was no more than dull, stupid, and boring, the intention to protest at work behind, however, lifted it to (albeit feeble) purposiveness. Like Fountain, Marcel Duchamps' famous lavatory bowl heightened to "art" by no more than the artist declaring it "art", the Booster was a "Ready-Made".

Why then did Orwell not point out the analogy between the Boosters and dada, between Miller and Tzara, that "indefatigable juggler", whose manifestos "were extended statements to the effect that there was nothing to state"(Modernism 299)? After all, in many ways there existed similarities in outlook, the anti-bourgeois, anti-rational impulse, certain anarchic streaks and frivolity, a predilection for violence and obscenity, immediacy, black comedy and flat self-contradiction. It is difficult to say. But there was the question of originality, and while dada had struck home as an original revolution, the Booster on the other hand, as Orwell said, was hardly even shocking in its unexpected, ostensibly intentional flatness.

The Boosters were neither poignant nor original. Orwell expected something explosive when he ordered a copy of the magazine. He was disappointed. Again, calculated disappointment had once been a favorite dadaistic device: the famous Cabaret Voltaire for instance once announced a "magnificent concert of negro music", but what was presented "showed not the least trace of negro influence, of course"(DGSS.26). Similarly Walter Serner placed flowers before a dummy instead of reading from his poetry, while the Dada Festival in May 1920 promised its visitors a personal appearance of Charlie Chaplin and that the dadaists would pull their hair out. Needless to say this did not happen (16). Robert Short described this techinque as one designed

to arouse expectations with tantalizing publicity and then to so disappoint these hopes that the audience would be forced on the rebound to realize the futility of its motives, to look over into the abyss of nothingness.(Modernism 300)

In like manner, according to Orwell, the Booster had accentuated its gesture of "supreme futility" by rousing expectations and disappointing them. Quoting at length from the Booster circular, Orwell remarked that after receiving such a letter one expects "a practical joke". He gave examples of the kind of joke the prospectus seemed to anticipate, a "magazine with entirely blank pages, or one which explodes a squib when you open it". What one received was "nothing of the kind". Disappointment of expectation Orwell assumed to be a part of the whole operation: like the man who spent a whole year preparing a bad joke, the Boosters had produced a boring magazine - and very much on purpose.

Orwell, in short, did not condone the Booster's attitude, did not imagine it to be "exactly a 'good life'" (NEW.xii.2.31). But he did not reproach the editors for quietism either, nor for passivity nor even for rampant irresponsibility or inconsistency, let alone for holding dangerously reactionary views. In fact, he did not mark off his view of the Booster in these terms at all, terms which were to be so so central to his post-war interpretation of Miller. On the contrary, the magazine was seen as activist and moral in effect, as emanating from a spirit of protest, albeit in an oblique and rather feeble manner. For the Boosters the measure of misunderstanding was full. In the New English Weekly of November 4th 1937 they answered Orwell's "attacks".

Their retort consisted partly of mockery and partly of a preprint of "a forthcoming editorial". The polemic was disappointingly inane and hardly worth mentioning. In a welter of weak insults, which substantiated rather than demolished Orwell's epithet of "damn-silly", "our George" was swept aside as being "not sufficiently pertinent" to deserve a proper answer. The letter ended with the rhetorical query: "Would yo (sic!) have us set the bed afire because we find a flea in it?"(NEW.xii.4.79).

There is some reason to suppose that Durrell concocted this weak reply to Orwell's review. The tone of Miller's letters to Orwell was usually kindly, if teasing, whereas Durrell later attacked the Englishman in a similarly polemical manner, calling him the "most puerile" (!) of the generally "impertinent" English critics, those moralistic "gas-light reformers" who wholly failed to understand the importance of Henry Miller (HR.6). Moreover, as we have pointed out above, it was Durrell who composed the editorial for the "Xmas Special : Tri-lingual Womb Number", and this editorial formed the core of the New English Weekly riposte.

The Booster editorials rendered, as was shown, in manifesto fashion some of Durrell's and Henry Miller's more serious concerns. They also manifested the burlesque and irrational spirit which motivated the Villa Seurat. In his Booster review, Orwell had taken note of neither aspect. Nevertheless, no matter how "snowballed in mysteries"(Corr.119), no matter how designedly clouded in word-play and self-contradiction, an attitude, political and artistic, was discernible in the Villa Seurat publication - if only one cared to look. And this attitude was plainly not a dadaist gaiety overlying a "profound despair" (AiP.127).

True, the New English Weekly letter itself started out with a flat denial that the Booster held any belief whatsoever: "To defend a position, however, implies that a position has been taken up, and since 'The Booster' asserted nothing there seems to be nothing to defend". But it then went on to proclaim that "the world we are living in is A POET'S WORLD", and this view (as much as the views expressed in the very first editorial) had nothing in common with what Orwell saw as a protest against futility. It is important to note that Orwell, who had quoted at length from the Booster prospectus -"We have no plans for reforming the world, no dogmas, no ideologies to defend"- could have seen this, but for some reason or other he did not.

Later, in "The End of Henry Miller", he used a quotation from the penultimate Delta to describe Miller's 'non-political' outlook, and even before in "Inside the Whale" he referred to the Booster, noting that it "used to describe itself in its advertisements as

'non-political, non-educational, non-progressive, non-co-operative, non-ethical, non-literary, non-consistent, non-contemporary'", adding significantly: "and Miller's own work could be described in nearly the same terms" (CE.i.549). The point is that Orwell had begun to take the ludicrously 'pointless' pronouncements from Paris seriously. He had begun to read the Villa Seurat magazine (perhaps also the stuff in French!). Had he read a little closer a little earlier, the New English Weekly letter alone would have showed him that the Booster's non-political professions, however contradictory and non-sensical, were not calculated as an ironic device, that they were not covert ways of "hitting back at Hitler, Stalin, Lord Rothermere, etc." - but from the vantage point of the Boosters meant quite literally, and from our vantage point an expression of the politics of 'non-politics'.

In the Booster letter to the New English Weekly, poetry's absolute primacy and that of the poet was strongly asserted. To the detached poet, as we have shown, a veritable Lao Tse, the decade and its horrors were like brightly coloured blossoms, artistic material in the "POET'S WORLD", where "uniforms are flowering in multitudinous profusion: wine is going up per liter: panic is coming down like a dropping lift". Miller said in "Balzac and his Double": "it is from this death of the world that the artist is obliged to draw his inspiration"(WoH.240). They revelled in it, and Orwell could have seen this. The vision implied in the editorial was essentially aesthetic - with political echoes resounding throughout. Black humour, a tinge of cynicism, but most of all a playful irresponsibility infused these lines, as it did the very choice of words. The Boosters exotically (one is almost tempted to say "lexiphanically") paraded themselves as "phrenetic, diseased, polymorph, glabrous, picayune, insomniac, vertiginous and cartiligenous". Careless and carefree, this 'artistic' outlook, which was later to elicit Orwell's angry remarks about irresponsible individualism and linguistic carelessness, was already manifest in the first editorial: "everything is excellent - including the high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not"(B.i.5). Again, although Orwell might have said much about this, he had not commented on it at all. It soon dawned on him, however, that his "Back to the Twenties" interpretation was insufficient.

In a letter to the editor which was published in the following issue of the New English Weekly on November 11th Orwell began by noting that from the Villa Seurat reaction one might conclude that "some of my bites have taken effect". He then pointed out that he had taken the Booster for "a designedly bad joke". Significantly, he did not actually reassert this notion, but only said that he could still not "see any sense in 'The Booster'". This, of course, was something entirely different from discerning purposive absurdity. Pausing, he now conceded that it "would appear" that he had been "badly mistaken about 'The Booster'". There may have been, he said, "some deep meaning in it which I failed to divine". In spite of the mild irony involved, it is noticable that the reader's attention was being subtly shifted away from what had previously been presented as the wider implications of the magazine ("modern life", "Hitler, Stalin, Lord Rothermere, etc.") to its actual content, however difficult to "divine". This does not mean that Orwell now took the assertions of the Boosters at face value. Possibly, however, he was beginning to re-think the political import of Miller and the Villa Seurat circus, and it must have been in these months that the ideas that grew into "Inside the Whale" gradually budded forth. Or did this rethinking occur somewhat later when he was recuperating in a hospital in Aylesford and Miller wrote to him: "stop thinking and worrying about the external pattern. One can only do his bit - you can't shoulder the responsibilities of the whole world"(BCGO.367f)?

The letter to the New English Weekly at any rate, was not long, and Orwell, who was busy finishing Homage to Catalonia, had perhaps grown weary of the whole business. As in his earlier review of Michael Fraenkel's Bastard Death, however, he was unaffectly willing to admit that he may not have fully understood everything. In that review he had regretted with remarkable frankness his inability to comprehend more of what he called a "remarkable book", pointing it out "to people with minds more abstract than my own"(CE.i.249). With a similar gesture, he now declared, that if indeed the Booster held more meaning than he could see, "it seems rather a pity that it should have been reviewed by such an unsuitable person". He went on to suggest that "someone better qualified than myself (Mr. Porteus, for example)" comment on the second number which had just appeared.

"Without feeling any 'better qualified' to do so than Mr. George Orwell, I gladly accept his invitation to comment on 'The Booster'". A week after Orwell's letter to the editor, Hugh Gordon Porteus made mention of the Villa Seurat magazine in an article entitled "Poetry" in the New English Weekly (NEW.xii.6.112f), and though he may not have felt better suited to review the Booster than Orwell, there were good reasons to assume that he was.

In the first place, he was far more familiar with the little magazine world than Orwell. We have already encountered him in his capacity as quarterly critic of the Criterion's important "British Periodicals" section. He also wrote for Purpose. He knew the little magazine world like the back of his hand.

When writing for the Criterion he shared in the fairly unbigoted spirit of Eliot's editorship, and though not without pungency his reviews seem to have been informed of an urbane striving for measured judgement. From this platform Porteus declared a deep wariness of propagandist zealotry, inquiring as he did with equal meticulousness into the field of the more political small reviews as well as into publications like Leavis' Scrutiny, Jolas' Transition or an ostracised sheet like Potocki's Right Review.

And yet, despite his calls for "a degree of dispassion"(Criterion.xvii.66.194), Porteus himself was not unbiased in his opinions. He shared in the Criterion's openess - and in its traditionalism, its firm opposition to left-wing literary politics. Porteus admired Eliot - also in his function as political commentator. He deplored that because of the political climate one could hardly any longer "speak with detachment" about this or that poet (Criterion.xvii.66.194) - and yet he was not above making use of the commonest prejudice to bring home an argument, describing, for example, English poetry as a "soil that produces almost nothing but a charming annual profusion of pansies and pinks"(Seven.v.25).

Porteus was a very close friend of that staunch reactionary Wyndham Lewis. Some called him a disciple of Lewis. In the beginning of their acquaintance Porteus "used to affect Lewis' mannerisms" (Meyers 203), publishing a "discursive exposition" on the Master, and winning his teasing acknowledgement as "my official reviewer"(LtWL.222). He wrote many "enthusiastic reviews" of Lewis' work for the Criterion and other magazines, and manifestly shared certain of his assumptions about art, politics and the modern world. Still, his Criterion criticisms of the little magazine situation were rarely acrimonious or ill-tempered and unlike Geoffrey Grigson, another admirer and friend of Lewis, "the gentle and puckish Porteus", as Lewis' biographer has called him (Meyers 205), was free of the Enemy's impressive but frequently wasteful ferociousness. He was free also of what Stephen Spender described as Lewis' "passionate egotism"(SS30s.39).

In Porteus' comments on literary politics in late 1937, in which he described the "startling and monstrous paradox" that a leftish attitude was demanded of everyone, though no one really believed in the Soviet experimet any longer, he characteristically spoke in the first person plural. He was not outside in the way that Lewis was:

> We have all reacted against non-politics, to begin with ... while we shrug our shoulders over the trials and purges of Stalin, and over the revelations of formerly well-disposed proletarians (I was a Soviet Worker) or intellectuals (André Gide), we still in our collective acts and opinions carry out, with a somnambulistic fatalism, the injunctions and will of post-Marxian Imperialism. (Criterion.xvii.66.193f)

It is in particlar the tone which distinguished his notes from Lewis' shrill polemics, say, against transition. Porteus once called his friend "simply a man with the best virtues of the bigger eighteenth-century figures, fastidious, penetrating, aloof but unpretentious" (LtWL.222). Actually in his own reviews this ideal may be said to have been more closely approximated.

Like "Wyndham (forgotten man) Lewis" - as Cyril Connolly called him (17) - Porteus was nevertheless very worried about the effects of what he regarded as a vicious left-wing cliquism on "our intellectual life"(Criterion.xvii.66.194). We have referred to this above. The term

"literary tyranny" occurred in a review in the very last number of the Criterion. Jolas' Transition, said Porteus, "has provided shelter for many refugees from literary tyrannies" (Criterion.xviii.71.395) - and in his opinion the "stifling and preposterous atmosphere" in literary London (Criterion.xvii.66.194) amounted to nothing less. This atmosphere, he noted in a review of Lewis' The Revenge for Love, was augmented by the reign of "an exceedingly unpleasant and unscrupulous gang of racketeers"(18), which assumption the Boosters, or more specifically, Lawrence Durrell, held with equal passion.

Porteus, whom Durrell had met and "liked awfully"(Corr.120) was the author of a book on Chinese art. This alone will have commended him to the 'Chinese' Henry and friends. They also shared his admiration for Wyndham Lewis, praising him - in Miller's words - "as a permanent enemy of the people"(19). In fact, for all their differences in temperament and motivation, the Boosters had in common with Lewis and Porteus not only their position outside the mainstream - Stephen Spender has called Lewis, "a self-declared outsider - 'the Enemy'" and also an exile (SS30s.200). Viewed from a humanistic standpoint, their writing was infused by a similarly anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-popular sentiment. Parallels abound. What Spender has described as a disturbing cultivation "of inhumanity"(SS30s.82) on the part of reactionary writers like Lewis, the Villa Seurat flaunted with a vengeance. The artist as "a traitor to the human race" was a definition Miller loved to quote (20).

However, there were differences as well. Referring to Time and Western Man Miller once said: "Don't always agree with him"(Corr.30). Indeed, at first sight, the distance was immense between Miller and Lewis, that late-Cartesian, who denounced surrealists, transition, Joyce, Gertrude Stein and the like, and who at one point vociferously supported the fascists "as potential mercenaries who might perhaps be the armies defending the past civilization" (SS30s.197). Nevertheless, although their conception of art differed in content, on the question of the artist's status they were singularly agreed.

The contrast between "the man with the proper creative obsession" and "the many with nothing but a conventionally unconventionl anti-academic academic equipment and 'taste'"(Seven.v.25) which Porteus stressed in a review of poetry volumes by Grigson and Symons, pervaded the work both of the Villa Seurat and of Wyndham Lewis. When the Boosters mocked the "artist" in their letter to the New English Weekly, "that whey-faced, sententious oaf who will exist a lifetime on lentils and cardamon-seed", when they demanded that the circus "have live animals in it: not critical fish-slices and little poets with rudimentary sexes" then this echoed Lewis' own attacks on the apish artistic amateurs, his "adulation of what he calls 'the party of genius' (meaning Michelangelo and Wyndham Lewis)"(SS30s.202). It also anticipated Porteus' demand in Seven: "The only solution to the communal art problem is to liquidate the less good poets and put them at the disposal of the better poets"(Seven.v.25). In short, Porteus was indeed better suited to talk about the Booster with insight than "our George" - or so it would seem.

"So we were all wrong about Porteus, after all"(LtAN.205), Miller wrote to Anais Nin from Corfu in 1939. Alfred Perlés had just reported that Porteus liked her Winter of Artifice "immensely"(ibid.). Before this there had evidently been reason to question his taste and understanding. Despite Durrell's initial enthusiasm - he even wanted to ask Porteus for a contribution to the Booster - the latter had fallen, it would seem, into disfavour. Whatever other reasons there were for this ill feeling, Porteus' comments on the Booster may very well have had something to do with it.

Porteus liked the Booster and said so in his comment. In direct contrast to George Orwell he held that "the first two issues of 'The Booster' have published some very good things indeed" (NEW.xii.6.113). He did not specify what individual items he meant. And, again disagreeing with Orwell, he found the Booster both "entertaining" and (like Julian Symons) "lively". He did not precisely say why.

Although he usally insisted that the contributions to a magazine should command the reader's interest rather than a magazine's political direction (Criterion.xvii.66.194f), what he said about the Villa Seurat magazine concentrated almost completely not on its contents but on further, as it were, extra-literary implications. As we have said, Porteus regarded sceptically the decade's increased "politicisation" and literature's subsequent propagandist permeation. Thus when he underlined that the Booster admirably took the part of "art" and "poetry" he was in fact defining the Villa Seurat in a wider framework, as part of a wider struggle. "Art", meaning in these times, work with a strong preponderance of 'non-political' concerns, had fallen on evil days, suggested Porteus, insisting that "anything that brings poor old art up to the public platform is to be praised". Apart from this more general assessment, Porteus also indicated that the Booster's lively self-presentation was almost certain to widen the readership of "poetry" (almost as if the Booster were a poetry magazine, which it was not). The Criterion's periodical specialist noted that it "will tap sections of the public not catered for by the more specialised poetry organs, such as 'New Verse' and 'XXth Century Verse'". Up to this point the Boosters, and especially Lawrence Durrell, may be presumed to have agreed.

But Porteus did not stop there. These were artless, political times, and - as he put it in the Criterion in July 1938 - however unpleasant a reviewer of little magazines might find this task: "the political aspect has to be faced"(Criterion xvii.69.763). Porteus (like Orwell and Julian Symons, a child of the age) felt that it was necessary to face "the political aspect" of the Booster, and this meant going beyond merely praising its artistic qualities and the fact that it brought "poor old art up to the public platform"(NEW.xii.6.113). Porteus had said in July 1937: "Periodicals encourage addicts; and like other drugs, they deserve to be studied in their useful as well as their dangerous aspects"(Criterion xvi.65.763). What were the political aspects of the Booster, in his eyes, and what were its dangerous sides? Porteus posed the right questions but he was just as incapable of putting his finger on the Booster's real political import, of seeing the dangerous aspects of its Nietzschean immoralism, as was Julian Symons(21).

Porteus did not actually use the term "political" in his comments on the Villa Seurat review; his ruminations only touched briefly on the Booster's "sociological" aspects. But this was enough. A political note was clearly audible when Porteus deliberated on the Villa Seurat magazine's possible effect on its audience. In the end he pronounced the Booster unsound from a sociological viewpoint. His reasons for doing so, however, were a far cry from Orwell's later insistence on a socially responsible literature.

The Booster, said Porteus at the beginning of his commentary, was not only lively but "indeed too lively"(NEW.xii.6.113). What precisely he meant by this was not immediately clear, but as one reads on, the following transpires: in marked contrast to the shock effect the Boosters had hoped for, in contrast to Orwell's assumption that the Booster was boring on purpose, Porteus felt that the magazine's liveliness and entertaining qualities set at ease, narcotised the reader, and, he said: "this is not a good thing"(ibid.). The Booster fostered a self-complacency which was dangerous or at any rate unfortunate. Why so? Its vivacity made for a kind of literary escapism, an escapism, as Porteus implied, not for the propoenets of a poetic isolation, the 'non-political' aesthetes and their readership, but for the model little review reader of the day, that socially conscious, anti-fascist, popular front literate, the Left Book Club member and Friend of the Soviet Union who belonged to the class of 50000 which Julian Symons later called "the Pragmatists" (JS30s.44f). Porteus disparagingly called him "the intellectual". Porteus, who well knew that heretical publications circulated clandestinely in left-wing circles (Criterion.xviiii.70.170) noted of the Booster: "It makes the intellectual feel he is a very fine and amusing fellow - where mass-observation, or some similar game, merely makes him feel fine and serious and shy"(NEW.xii.6.113).

Porteus assumed that the readership of the Booster would naturally belong to the left part of the political spectrum. To a contemporary Porteus' derogatory comparison (or rather: association) with Mass Observation, that radically collectivist socio-artistic venture, probably spoke for itself. Of the other games he might have had in

mind when comparing the Booster with more serious ventures of the time one was "The Oxford Collective Poem" - in his own words: "Oxford without being Collective or even a poem"(Seven.v.25). The upshot, at any rate, which Porteus ascribed to the Villa Seurat magazine was unhappily "conservative", in the sense that it was more than likely to shore up the fashionable left-wing orthodoxy. All but ignoring the Booster's explicit a-political claims and as well as the Nietzsche-an-Spenglerian undertones (in this he resembled Orwell), Porteus felt that implicitly it no more than rounded off the "intellectual's" self-image (making him feel "fine and amusing" and open-minded, presumably). The abominable status quo was cemented, the "literary dictatorship" which we have spoken of above buttressed. But in such times, "intellectuals" or rather, the many "who regard themselves as belonging to the 'intellectual class'"(NEW xii.6.113) - Lewis would have said "revolutionary simpletons" - had no reason, no right to feel satisfied with themselves. It was consequently very wrong to allow them to feel that way. This, as we have quoted Porteus above, "this is not a good thing"(ibid.).

The Booster and Bernard Causton's Dope.

Before going on to discuss the last comment in the Booster-controversy in the New English Weekly, the comparison drawn by Porteus between the Villa Seurat review and another little magazine deserves some attention. It was more or less in passing that Porteus noted: "And no doubt, sociologically regarded, 'Dope' is what 'The Booster' is" (NEW.xii.6.113). 'Dope', however, was not only what the Booster was, but also, as Porteus pointed out, a review which had appeared in London "a few years ago"(ibid.). In point of fact, Dope was a short-lived sixpenny broadsheet no more than two numbers of which appeared in January and July 1932. It was a little magazine, in newspaper format. Its editor, Bernard Causton was working in Fleet Street at the time of its publication. In the Booster years he was in Berlin where he spent six years as a newspaper correspondent. Porteus, who was, it seems, as interested in the broadsheet's suggestive name as he was brief in discussing its editorial attitude, noted: "its contents, or at least its general outlook, had something in common with 'The Booster'" (ibid.). The question is: had this review really anticipated

the Villa Seurat magazine? Was the Booster not that singular a publication after all? Porteus' rather hesitant or vague phrasing does suggest that the comparison between the two publications was not as easy or straightforward as all that. Still, even though he said very little, the comparison is of interest for us, as indeed, some of Dope's self-descriptive jaunts seemed to approximate with accuracy the tone and (to a degree) content of the Booster:

> Not Satire, turning life into one long nervous titter. 'Dope' not an Enemy of 'Society', and needs no parish. For humour, in the midst of desert, why not an oasis of unorganised fun? Hence, no 'advocacy', no taking care of readers, nor 'refuting' opponents convictions. (Dope.ii.1)

In what ways then did Dope resemble its Parisian "descendant"? As its editor emphasised in the second editorial, as well as in a February 1932 letter to Oxford Outlook entitled "How and Why Dope?" (OO.xii.57.66f), Dope conceived of itself as a "revue" rather than a "review". This was an obvious parallel to the showy spirit of entertainment manifest in the early Booster. Very much like the Villa Seurat organ, Causton's sheet, which was "proud of its newspaper format"(Dope.i.1), shouted at its reader "in a 'front-page' manner" (OO.xii.57.66), loudly, graphically, provocatively and directly: "Betray your sense of values, DEAR READER"(Dope.i.1). Like the Booster's , the editorials of Dope were staccato self-celebrations, short and programmatic, ironical and convinced of the sheet's singular distinction. Causton's first editorial which brandished the title: THE PAPER THAT DOES NOT COMPETE, proclaimed, for instance, in an impatiently haughty way which might have come directly from the pages of the Booster letter: "In Dope there will be no space for culture-fans to relate WHAT MAETERLINCK MEANS TO ME"(Dope.i.1). Mixed with this strutting overbearance was a comical and teasing self-deprecation which also calls to mind the Booster: "Causton writing on Proust in 'Nineteenth Century and After'" read a line from the "Stop Press", followed by the earnest advice: "After which take Dope!"(Dope.ii.1). Moreover, Dope sported a column entitled CREAM OF THE NEWS in which selected morsels from the popular press were reprinted, items which taken from their original context exude a strong aroma of absurdity and remind one of the Booster's comical use of the obligatory Country

Club news and society advertisements. Causton's review gave away the "Dope of the Month Award", the July 1932 prize going to the Evening Standard for a report which might have pleased the Fashion Editor of the Booster: "New dress ideas for Spring brides include a Dutch cap made from white satin, to be worn under the bridal veil of lace or tulle..."(Dope.ii.3). A congruency in tone is apparent.

Anticipating also, it would seem, the Villa Seurat magazine's eclectic penchant, Dope boasted its impatience with coteries and "the enervating atmosphere of a mutual admiration society"(Dope.i.1). It asserted expressly how very different its contributors were from one another, and how broad in consequence its own approach.

Porteus may be forgiven for finding in the Booster's anarchistic buffoonery an echo to Causton's call for some "unorganised fun", in the latter's insistence that Dope was not "advocating" or "refuting" anything a precursor to the Parisian refrain: "We have no plans for reforming the world, no dogmas, no ideologies to defend" (IntHML.iv.22). He may be forgiven for finding analogies in content or "at least" in general outlook. Dope and the Booster overlapped in certain respects; the general attitude, however, diverged markedly, for if anything Dope was an organ of the thirties generation.

Julian Symons once noted that "the dream of the Thirties comprehended both earnestness and irresponsibility"(JS30s.69). The obverse side to the decade's deep seriousness and frequently heavy-handed engagement in political developments, asserted itself not only in a fascination with psychoanalysis, but also in a penchant for "anarchic comedy" (ibid.68), playful erraticism as well as a cheerful exploration of popular culture. Julian Symons again: "It is possible to take a quite different view of the Thirties from that which sees the period as one of breast-beating earnestness, and to maintain that it is marked by an excessive regard for the trivial and flippant"(ibid.). By way of explanation he also quoted Auden's almost programmatic remarks from an essay on psychology and art on the necessity both of "escape-art" and of "parable-art". The latter, Auden had pointed out, should "teach man to unlearn hatred and learn love"(ibid.68f). Many of the generation of Auden and Symons believed it possible to combine the one with the

other, and Dope, "a quick paper for serious people" and "a serious paper for funny people"(Dope.ii.1) was no exception.

In spite of what Porteus remembered, Dope was not "dope" in the narcotic sense of the word. It was "LIVING NEWS", presented itself as a broadsheet with a purpose, and though it claimed that it advocated nothing, it made no secret of its educative and monitory intent. As Bernard Causton noted in his wordy MANIFESTO which occupied an overwhelming part of the first issue: "I have a mania for persecuting you - into thinking"(ibid.i.2). Dope was a periodical of a new generation of writers and artists, an early, albeit marginal manifestation both of that didactic spirit which spoke from Auden's definition of "parable art" and of its comical counterpart. Indeed, though no more than two numbers appeared, Causton's sheet issued some items which may be said to be characteristic of the coming decade. It printed work by some of the generation's more prominent poets, artists and experimental film-directors, including Len Lye (who composed the front page "Pop Lyric"), Oswell Blakeston, Humphrey Jennings (one of the founders of Mass Observation, incidentally), J. Bronowski, editor of the Cambridge little magazine Experiment and of European Caravan, Stephen Potter, Stanley Hayter, a painter whose L'apocalypse was prefaced by Georges Hugnet and who provided Stephen Spender's 1939 Fraternity with engravings. More important, among the contributors was Auden himself.

Causton's editorials consciously spoke for a new generation, "the post-war generation"(Dope.i.1). The crisis years 1931 and 1932, so crucial in the forming of the young writers' sensibility, were the "watershed between the post-war years and the pre-war years, the point at which the mood of the 'thirties first became generally apparent" (Hynes 65). Indeed, the year of Dope was also the year of The Orators, and - more significant - of the first New Signatures anthology. Dope's declared aim - Michael Roberts' New Signatures anthology was announced in the second number - was "to make fresh ideas accessible to the public"(Dope i.1), to present "good new stuff in arts" (ibid.ii.1), to facilitate the reception of "a new thought"(ibid.i.2). Like many of the little magazines and anthologies which followed and wore that magical epithet "New" in their titles, its impulse was innovative, critical and contemporary, journalistic not alone in

layout. It was a thirties small review.

Though (as in the work Auden had published up to this point) a deep interest in Freudianism was evident, no clear political alignment was as yet discernible; the idea of straying into the politico-economic world, however, worried neither the editor nor Dope's contributors. Bronowski's prose poem "CRISIS", for example, sketched in rough strokes the bankruptcy and "decay" of modern Britain, its moral, political and economic disintegration, referring also to ineffective financial policies, weak politicians, to "the powerful, the speculators and oilfinders, the racketeers; the armament-royalty", by name to Oswald Mosley, to Lady Astor, Sitwell (which?), to Wyndham Lewis and even Adolf Hitler. In short, many of the new decade's concerns and preoccupations were there, including the anticipation of a clearing apocalypse (Millenarian or Communist?): "while the wind rises, that is no nation's wind". Bronowski wrote: "But, few, leave joking; that see the sharp ferment rise"(Dope.i.1)

A "new life"(Dope.i.1) was the goal of Dope, and however variously the contributors may have defined this (we will come to the editor's pro-surrealist, pro-Freudian, but essentially religious viewpoint presently), it is important to note that the thirties generation's impatience with the old answers (including the literary ones), a consciousness of collapse, as well as the need for a new beginning were pervasive. Causton: "Writing that is living and not Literature must almost inevitably express the experience of tension"(ibid.i.2). What is also significant was that this renewal was to occur in England. Holding out towards the post-war poets, the "veteran Jeremiahs" (ibid.i.1), meaning Eliot and Pound and the like, a paradoxical optimism characteristic of this shift in literary sensibility, Dope noted: "We are impatient of the dilettantish snobbism that pronounces England 'impossible' and makes it so"(ibid.i.1). Its objective was modern art (with especial reference to films) and what might be called moral re-integration. To many of the younger writers of this time change seemed possible, action held promise - on a social, collective basis as well. Thus Bernard Causton, asking categorically: "Who put psychology and writing into separate pigeon-holes?"(ibid i.2), may almost be said to have foretold the path of many of his generation,

when he postulated psychological approaches at the service of social and moral renewal. "Psychoanalysis leaves problems of moral responsibility directly unprescribed but implicit. The limitation of criterion to social adaptation is a necessary retrenchment for moralists" (ibid.i.3). The social note was struck, economic concerns voiced (both in Causton's MANIFESTO, in Bronowski's poem, in Geoffrey Biddulph's "the Golden Calf", a straightforward analysis of Britain's financial policies), and the fact that the despised literary critics were "'opposed to the politicisation of art'" dispelled all doubt (ibid.i.3).

Indeed, taken from the ivory tower and into the market place, art was declared not "a collector's trophy"; it ought to be inexpensive and accessible, said the first editorial. Even more symptomatic for the rapprochement of artistic and social concern was the fact that Dope, whose editor had just published Keeping it Dark ; a Censor's Handbook, stood unambivalently against censorship: "We must seek out, watch and, with keen regard for results, attack censorship"(ibid.i.1). In his "Manifesto" which climaxes in an attack on "the atheist Puritans who govern our civilisation"(ibid.i.4) Causton expatiated on a theme that was to echo through the decade, namely the insistence that "more liberty should be 'contrived'"(ibid.i.3).

In short then, the "conception of social morality", which Julian Symons saw "at the heart of the Thirties dream"(JS30s.66) was plainly manifest in Dope. In direct contrast to Miller's magazine, Dope was "not an Enemy of 'Society'"(Dope.ii.1), its comedy the obverse side not of a mystical solipsism ("faith, and the ability to laugh"), which spent itself celebrating the artist-hero, that "traitor to the human race"(Hamlet 82), but of an essentially libertarian concern for moral and social renewal.

In one deeper rooted though somewhat unlikely aspect, however, Dope did resemble the Booster. We have referred to the analogy between Dope's "Cream of the News" column and the Booster's "Country Club News". The principle at work behind these two items was the same, namely the conscious estrangement of an object from its usual surroundings, altering in other words the way it is usually seen, thereby

setting free comical energy as well as calling into question its previous context and ordinary reality as such. The principle at work was an old one: Marcel Duchamps "Ready-Mades" have already been mentioned in this chapter, the technique of which had early become an integral part of the "surrealist program to discredit conventional reality"(Ray 28). When the Boosters agreed to keep two pages of banal Club notes in every issue, they were of course aware of this quasi-surrealistic effect, and so was Bernard Causton when he quoted in his creamy column, say, a coroner's observation that "Suicides invariably remove their hats"(Dope.i.1). Like the Villa Seurat, then, Causton was attracted to and familiar with ideas and devices of French surrealism, though (as should be clear by now) the use this knowledge was put to differed markedly.

In both its issues Dope strongly publicised surrealism. It advertised various surrealistic works, magazines and articles (such as "What is Surréalism?" by Peter Neagoe, who was an acquaintance of Miller), as well as films and paintings. It criticised the Film Society for never having shown L'Age d'Or or Un Chien Andalou, and noted: "Surreáliste pictures by French and Americans were shown at the Julien Levy Galleries, New York in January."(Dope.ii.3). To this was added the important question "Why not in England?". Although it went on to say "But naturally,'Dope' is more concerned with mooting its own must"(ibid.), nevertheless a play presented in the second issue of Dope was entitled "The Upper Depths" and displayed meaningfully on "a dissecting table anywhere", one Adravada in the role of the "Sewing Machine", one Causton in that of the "Umbrella unfurled" (Dope.ii.2). Moreover, the editor's "Manifesto" spoke in high terms of "sur-réaliste" ideas and activities.

Causton felt (as early as January 1932) that "Surrealisme, in fact, is greatly overdue in England"(Dope.i.2). In contrast to David Gascoyne and the young surrealists of the years 1935/36, his interest did not, however, imply whole-hearted involvement. In this he resembled Miller and his friends. Just as he took his stand "as pro-Freudian rather than Freudian" (ibid.i.3), he was also pro-surrealist rather than a surrealist. Despite a certain sympathy with communism, he did not condone the surrealists' wooing of the Third International. Nor did he

actually comment on central problems of surrealist art (automatism). Like many Englishmen who wrote about surrealism, he was conscious that England's literary traditions diverged strongly from the French, which meant in practical terms that "we shall take from surrealisme and discard from it just what our very different circumstances require"(ibid.i.2). More important, however, was the fact that Causton expressed his belief in a spiritual dimension of reality, whereas, as we have pointed out esrlier, in spite of its investigations into the occult, surrealism was "careful to assert always its essential materialist bases"(Ray 55).

Causton, who described himself as not an atheist, regarded psychoanalysis and surrealism as ways of "exorcizing rationalization" (OO.xii.57.67). He said in his manifesto: "It is those, however, with a sense of personal religious experience who will be untouched by Freud's presumption to explain faith in God as a childhood neurosis" (Dope.i.3). His libertarian penchant in short was an integral part of a religious, though not conventionally Christian, vision, and so the magazine's title suddenly took on another meaning: "our cry is 'New Dope for Old'" (ibid.i.3). Causton said in his programmatic essay: "the pioneer work will have to be done by those whom Newman once defined as the 'twice born'"(ibid.). He did not mean the Bretonian materialists, either, however dialectical.

Nevertheless, his response to surrealism was not that which predominated in England in the first part of the decade. Unlike most English critics and unlike Miller and Durrell, Causton did not believe that it represented "little more than the reaffirmation of the ideas of the romantic age concerning the imagination, that there is little that is fundamentally new in surrealism; that all poets, in a sense, are surrealists"(Ray 85). In spite of his reservations, he said that of all the movements abroad surrealism was "nearest in affinity with my attack on rationalistic superstition" (Dope.i.2). Paying a passing tribute to "the surrealiste phantasmagorias" of Breton, Aragon, Crevel, Peret and Ribemont Dessaignes, he indicated "certain affinities of this paper with the surréalistes who are working, naturally rather differently, on somewhat parallel problems in their own country"(ibid.). These "affinities", however, were not so much a

matter of artistic technique (as they were with the Villa Seurat writers), nor were they limited to specific merits, the fact, for instance, that the surrealists had admirably developed a working relation to psychoanalysis that was neither "solemn" nor "servile" (ibid.). What Causton had in mind, it seems, when he aligned his magazine with the surrealists, was their strong, essentially humanistic drive for the liberation of man's imagination from the bonds of rationacionation, a campaign which for them had increasingly come to involve the outer world as well. Geoffrey Thurley once pointed out that: "Surrealism, despite its whimsical by-products, was essentially a moralistic idiom, a product of a world-situation of plethora and horror"(Thurley 99). Causton, it appears, agreed. The surrealists provided a comprehensive answer where other answers did not suffice: "To be possessed of the urgency of surréalisme is surely the result of feeling the exasperation at finding oneself a prey to the contemporary intellectual miasma"(Dope.i.2). For the author of Keeping it Dark, surrealism was not a literary or artistic phenomenon, but (like psychoanalysis) first and foremost a mode of arriving at "more liberty", and, in contrast to the Villa Seurat a-moralists, this freedom was not the reserve of the artist-hero and other "aristocrats of the spirit". In the epilogue of his fascinating The Surrealist Movement in England Paul C. Ray said:

> By refusing to recognize in surrealism a doctrine that affects all of man's life, a doctrine that offers a new statement of man's relation to the world, and by insisting that the contribution of surrealism was largely a literary or artistic one, the English deprived themselves of precisely what surrealism had to offer.(Ray 308)

Although ignored by literary historians, Dope appears to merit at least a peripheral place in the story of English surrealism if only because Causton did place its revolutionary humanism over purely aesthetic implications.

Dope also deserves mention because of its contributors. Humphrey Jennings, friend of David Gascoyne's and organiser of the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition, contributed (an odd letter saying he had nothing "very inspiriting to tell England at the moment" (Dope.i.4). And Auden contributed. Auden was of course no surrealist,

and his contribution, an untitled poem, which was reprinted with considerable alteration in the 1950 Collected Poems as "1st January 1931", was no surrealist poem. But as Paul Ray said, Auden was not wholly disinclined to use "certain surrealist devices in order to make his didactic points"(Ray 272), a point which Hugh Gordon Porteus had also made in a February 1933 issue of the socialist Promethean Society's Twentieth Century (22). Indeed, although surrealism made its way from Paris to London (and to the imagination of the young Lawrence Durrell) very slowly, there had been occasional outbursts of interest (or of hostility: vide Wyndham Lewis in the Enemy) before David Gascoyne's Short Survey, Hugh Sykes Davies' Petron and Roger Roughton's Contemporary Poetry and Prose of the mid-decade, and of these early appreciations Dope was certainly one. A fair number of Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates were aware of surrealism before the turn of the decade (Hynes 217), and one might mention in this context not only the references to surrealist paintings in Oxford Outlook(Hynes 217) but also two Paris-American magazines we have encountered before. The September 1932 number of Titus' This Quarter, was edited by Breton himself, and printed only surrealist texts, one of which, Dali's "The Stinking Ass" was translated by Dope contributor J. Bronowski. Also, a 1930 issue of transition had reprinted from Bronowski's Experiment an essay by David Gascoyne's friend, the painter Julian Trevelyan. This article "demonstrates that the surrealist campaign did not go unnoticed in England"(Ray 76). Trevelyan, who contributed to the Exhibition in London in 1936 and belonged to the hard core of the English surrealist group(Ray 216f), was listed in the second number of Dope as one of a number of "forthcoming contributors" (Dope.ii.4).

Another writer who was put down as a possible contributor for Dope no.3 (which never appeared) was George Reavey. Reavey later ran the Europa Press, which was based in London and Paris. He never managed, as we shall see, to publish Dylan Thomas' collection of short stories The Burning Baby. By the mid-thirties Reavey was heavily involved in English surrealism. At the Exhibition, for example, he was one of the English poets (along with Gascoyne and Jennings) who read their own poetry. Contemporary Poetry and Prose printed a number of these. He also translated surrealist (and related) verse, including for instance

six poems by Picasso for Contemporary Poetry and Prose (CPP.iv/v.45). He compiled, edited and published a selection of poems by Eluard called Thorns of Thunder in 1936 (other translators included Gascoyne, Jolas, Denis Devlin, Ruthven Todd, Man Ray, Beckett), and in 1938 he worked as assistant editor for the London Bulletin, a magazine which became "the quasi-official surrealist publication in England"(23). We refer to Reavey in detail, not alone because of a possible if tenuous link between Causton's Dope circle and the mid-decade flowering of English surrealism, but also because he was a "forthcoming" contributor to the Villa Seurat Booster as well! He had sent to Miller a number of poems for publication, which, however, were returned (as Miller wrote to Durrell) with a notice "saying we would ask for them back later on"(Corr.facs.lett.). These poems never appeared.

Return to the Booster exchange in the New English Weekly

In that note to Durrell, set down on impressive Booster stationery, the young poet was informed by his American friend of a success they had scored: "Blakeston says that we got a write-up by Herring (for Booster) in Life and Letters recently"(Corr.facs.lett.). The conveyor of these "glad tidings" was a Booster contributor himself, and had just been translated by Perlès for the Tri-Lingual Womb number. Along with George Reavey and Porteus, he was one of the new London acquaintances Durrell "liked awfully"(Corr.121). He had also been a front-page contributor to Causton's "Twentieth Century Broadsheet". And furthermore, the final comment on the Villa Seurat paper in the New English Weekly exchange, some observations which appeared in the very same issue in which Hugh Gordon Porteus casually worked in his Dope comparison, consisted of a letter to the editor by former Dope contributor Oswell Blakeston.

Blakeston was a poet and more: he was a many-sided experimentalist. Critic, editor, artist, photographer and film-director, he frequented the pages of numerous periodicals, of glossy paged weeklies and cheap avantgarde art reviews. In a note on contributors, Life and Letters Today (LLT.xvi.7.xi) listed a few of these, including Dope, The Bookman, The Listener, Twentieth Century, Programme, New Oxford

Outlook, Janus, The Literary Review, Soma, Film Art, John O'London's Weekly, Cinema Survey. Like his occasional drinking companion, Dylan Thomas -"I had Nights Out with those I always have Nights Out with: Porteous (sic), Cameron, Blakeston, Grigson, and old Bill Empson and all"(DTSL.170)- Blakeston reviewed regularly for the New English Weekly as well.

He was a writer of suspense stories. Life and Letters Today mentioned that a number of his "Weird stories" had been issued in numerous "recent collections"(LLT.xvi.7.xi). He published in Liliput, a popular (and presumably well paying) pocket magazine which combined sensational and political reportage (Koestler, Liddell-Hart, Toller), art criticism (Wyndham Lewis, Feuchtwanger), with the 'timeless' stories of love, adventure and mystery (including some by the Booster/Delta contributors Karel Capek, Antonia White and William Saroyan) as well as hard-hitting cartoons and excellent photographs (Bill Brandt, Cecil Beaton, Brassai). It was edited by Stefan Lorant.

In 1933 Blakeston had begun editing a review called Seed with Herbert Jones. In 1935 Dylan Thomas was referring in a letter to Rayner Heppenstall to "Oswell's supplement" to the Majorca based Caravel (editors: Sydney Salt, Jean Rivers, Charles Henri Ford)(DTSL.163). In 1938 he edited a poetry collection entitled Proems, which included some of his own poetry as well as work by Edgar Foxall, Rayner Heppenstall, Patrick Evans, Ruthven Todd and Lawrence Durrell. A literary Jack of all trades, Blakeston had already published eight books by the time he came to the Booster. Like Miller, Durrell and Victor Gollancz, he was a Duke of Redonda; he sported a taste for the mildly eccentric, pointing out in a letter to the Sunday Times, that he was not only the author of "the first novel with an index and the first fiction in spiral binding" but also the first "to compose a book of one-word poems", quite apart from being once again the first "to have an exhibition in a London's butcher shop"(24).

Above all, however, Blakeston was engaged in the propagation and in the production of avant-garde films. He belonged to the world of experimental film art, which arrived in England only when the era of silent movies drew to a close. Significantly his poetry volume Death

While Swimming (1932) was illustrated by Len Lye, who was not only a friend of David Gascoyne (DG.i.13), fellow contributor to Dope, as we have noted above, but (moreso than Blakeston) a central figure in the world of experimental filming. Lye, whose experiments with trick films and handmade films were seminally important (Scheugl 574), also created in 1936 a puppet film entitled The Birth of a Robot with Humphrey Jennings. An article "Sketches by Len Lye" was one of Blakeston's numerous contributions to Close Up, a important film magazine around which incidentally many young English experimentalists gathered until it closed down in 1933. He was an authoritative film critic, having by 1932, as he indicated in the first issue of Dope, already worked for five years in the metier. Moreover, he produced a number of films himself, and although his projects did not always materialise (except as blueprints in the pages of Close Up or other magazines) the films Flight of Fancy and Afterthought might be mentioned, as well as Light Rhythms(1930). The latter, produced in collaboration with Belgian born Francis Bruguière, was an experiment in abstract filming, which employed three-dimensional forms set in motion by lighting alone (Scheugl 30). It is frequently mentioned in histories of experimental filming. Blakeston, who also worked with Bruguière on a book entitled Few are Chosen. Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre (1931), later called himself: "Pioneer of abstract films"(25), and although others had gone before him his claim more or less squared with the facts.

Blakeston for one was convinced of the importance of his own activity. In the first number of Dope, for instance, he discussed the likelihood that a form of pictorial film criticism would take the place of written criticism, pointing out : "THERE WILL BE: short trailers in the news theatres pictorially criticising events current in the big house programmes, visual analysis of important cinema works on the home screens"(Dope.i.1). With characteristic aplomb, this poet/critic (who once "told André Gide how to cook écrevisse") added that he believed he "really did make the first film of pictorial criticism way back in 1929", a film which by way of parenthesis also "created riots in Paris"(Dope.i.1). In its "Notes on new Contributors" the November Booster only noted dryly about Oswell Blakeston:"Too well known to be treated extensively here"(B.iii.49).

In the correspondence section of Mairet's weekly, then, this many-sided adept, propagator of a playfully avant-garde art and almost a British approximation to the versatile Jean Cocteau (on whose sculpted waxen hand he once apparently sat down accidentally), volunteered as "unsolicited witness for the defence of 'The Booster'" (NEW.xii.6.119). But although he himself was a contributor to the Paris periodical, although his mind was evidently receptive to the quirks and twists of modernism, his testimony was colourless and faint. Like the other above reactions to the Booster, he combined in his "unsolicited" comments a certain degree of perceptiveness with confusion, vagueness and misapprehension. Once again, it would seem, the Booster failed to ignite a critical potential which was undeniably there.

Blakeston's irresolute epistle concentrated on three points. First, it was suggested that contrary to appearances the Booster was not an "irresponsible" magazine at all. Second, he voiced his assumption that the Boosters hid themselves behind their ostentatious editorial pronouncements "for fear of being hurt", and thirdly, he commended "the neat use the editors have made of the back cover".

We might begin with the latter observation. One would hardly be inclined to dispute Blakeston's approval. To take it, however, as one indication of the Booster's extraordinariness seems exaggerated and malapropos.

As to Blakeston's second point, the notion that the editors put forward their "blasé manifesto" in order to thwart some painful infringement from the outside seems on the face of it plausible enough. It is not clear precisely what they were guarding against, but the hypothesis appears a sound enough anexplanation, almost a psychological commonplace one would think (vide the defensive use of obscurity in the early poetry of Dylan Thomas). What they were up against Blakeston assumed the reader would know, but did he really? Was it the more abstractly horrific reality of modern life as such, or the more concrete political world of Hitler, Stalin and Lord Rothermere which Orwell loathed so much, or did Blakeston have in mind no

more than outside reproaches for their particular attitude - attacks by critics such as Grigson, Symons or even Porteus? He did not say. What he said was: "No one can hurt them: they have got in the first gibe!".

This explanation, however plausible a psychological construction, had little to do with the Booster or its editors. Blakeston's idea probably derived from the feeling that literary talent necessarily springs from 'sensitiveness', and sensitiveness necessarily implies vulnerability. Because Miller, Durrell, Anais Nin and the others wrote well - they must be emotionally out in the open and thus vulnerable. The possibility that a writer might be capable of conjuring on paper without 'suffering' with the world outside, without perhaps even caring a fig about it, except as material for his art-work, a notion which might have suggested itself to an essentially aesthetic imagination like Blakeston's, was apparently not taken into consideration here. But, if anything, Miller (who was the Booster) had made it clear, again and again, both in his writing and (often though not consistently) in the way he lived, that he considered his individual existence in terms which excluded anything that was not "direct, immediate and personal"(IntHML.v.19). No one could hurt the Boosters, not because they were delicately sensitive and lucky enough to have gotten in "the first gibe" - but because they were indifferent. On the whole,and unless they were directly implicated, they simply did not care.

It was difficult to grasp that (despite the Nietzschean Übermensch invoked) when they said: "For us things are all right just as they are"(B.i.5) - they actually meant it. Blakeston's was the same fallacy which later led Nicholas Moore to portray Henry Miller as essentially philanthropic, as one who was motivated by "a loving understanding of human weakness" (NMHM.12), who cared "too much" about the world and mankind, "no matter with what bravado he may deny it"(NMHM.10). The whole point about the Booster, however, was that, no matter how often people like Blakeston and Moore read into it a "deeper" responsability, its blasé manifestoes and bravura assertions of indifference were, to a large extent, meant quite literally. They might have rung strangely in the ears of someone raised in a liberal,

humanistic tradition and living in the London of the 1930s (and they were of course intended to do so), they might have understandably elicited the outcry: "There must be an irony at work somewhere". In point of fact, however, more often than not there were no false bottoms to the more outrageous statements in Booster editorials, at any rate none which gave way to a humanistic norms or more 'edifying' meaning than what was proclaimed verbatim et literatim.

We come to Blakeston's first point. Blakeston opened his plea for the Booster by saying: "Many magazines present an appearance of 'weight' but, on deeper examination, prove irresponsible". He did not say which magazines, nor what he meant by "weight", nor in what terms he would define "responsibility". He simply hastened on to say, that with the Booster it was exactly the other way around: behind "surface" irresponsibility, there were revealed "on closer scrutiny" a number of writers "who have something to say", who "have a message which might easily be of importance in the present crisis". These writers were, by inference, in some way "responsible".

Viewed from a certain angle, the notion that the Villa Seurat were not an "irresponsible" group of artists was not as far-fetched as all. After all Anais Nin and Durrell agreed that "what seems to be irresponsibility in the artist is deeper down a responsibility towards his work, first of all"(AN.ii.236). Indeed, the Villa Seurat's absolute emphasis on the artists's duty to himself, their assertion of the aesthetic prerogative and rejection of all outer (especially political) infringement, these convictions were to gain ground as the decade ended and the hopes of the Auden generation were shattered. Blakeston, however, did not explain what he meant by their deeper responsibility. He simply left it at that. It is not easy to understand why Blakeston did not feel the need to give substance, even an iota of backing evidence, to his claims (except the one praising the good employment of the back cover) nor why he did not use this occasion to reassert the aesthetic prerogative which had suffered in the political literary climate of the period. Aside from the unsatisfactory information that he had read the Booster "with pleasure and interest", aside from the knowledge that here was one critic who felt that "this is no ordinary 'little' magazine", the reader walked

away from his letter empty-handed, as ill-provided with ideas as to what the Booster actually was, as if he had just come from Julian Symons' short paragraph in Life and Letters Today.

Of all the reviewers we have mentioned in this chapter, Blakeston, artist/critic of the avant-garde, playful pioneer and Booster contributor himself, a man who had "created riots in Paris" and experimental films in London, might have been expected to ruffle the pages of the New English Weekly with a stirring and combative plaidoyer. He might have been expected to speak about the Villa Seurat magazine with feeling and insight. Why he did not, we cannot say. As it happened, one is reminded of what D.G.Bridson had written about political and non-political poetry in the Criterion earlier that year: "The only trouble is that in hardly a single case is the unpolitical poetry which decorates the pages of Poetry and any of the other American periodicals any whit superior to the political" (Criterion.xvi.53.404). As far as the Booster was concerned one is forced to say: in hardly a single case were non-political comments any whit superior to the political, and when Durrell wrote to Paris about the reactions to the Booster noises saying that Miller and friends could not "conceive the bewilderment of people who sit outside in London, for example, and listen" (Corr.119) presumably he had in mind non-political as well as political reactions, people like Blakeston as well.

Notes

1. From autumn 1938 to summer 1939 Seven printed the Delta ad on its back cover.
2. NV.xxxi/xxxii.26. I do not understand why Hynes says that here Grigson "elaborately avoids mentioning politics" (Hynes 337).
3. D.Mirsky "About Stephen Spender and C.Day Lewis". International Literature, October 1936.
4. This review was issued in summer 1939 when both magazines had already folded up.
5. ibid.188f. Julian Symons: "It is interesting to notice that for the unpolitical Grigson, as for many others, 'liberal' had become like 'Fascist' a term of literary abuse" (JS30s.129).
6. The Phoenix outlasted Symons' own poetry review by well over a year.

7. LLT.xvii.10.10. Julian Symons has written about the question which strained the imagination of a whole generation of film-goers, whether the Marx brothers were 'social satirists' or not (JS30s.66).
8. LLT.xviii.11.np.
9. SS30s.201; CE.i.145; Muggeridge 43f.
10. DTSL.123; Corr.29.
11. BCGO.349,382.
12. CE.i.28; BCGO.294.
13. CE.iv.134,136.
14. RWCS.280; BCGO.622.
15. NEW.xii.2.30f. This review, interestingly, was followed by Fraenkel's "Active Negation" essay (ibid.31f).
16. DGSS.30, 38.
17. In his journal (CCJM.268).
18. Kirk 251. See: Criterion.xvii.66.193-198.
19. Miller and Lewis met in America in 1940 and they liked one another, though Lewis did not think very much of Miller's work. He also thought that Miller would not find his own appealing either. He was wrong. Miller had read many of his books (Meyers 253).
20. Hamlet 82; Corr.46.
21. Revealingly, Porteus considered Symons' Life and Letters Today analysis of the little magazine situation a "civil and penetrating review" (Criterion.xviii.70.170f).
22. Ray 217; Hynes 412.
23. Ray 218, 140,181; the aforementioned George Hugnet, editor of the Petite Anthologie Poétique de Surréalisme, incidentally was the periodical's Paris representative.
24. Sunday Times. 21st Nov.1982.35.

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